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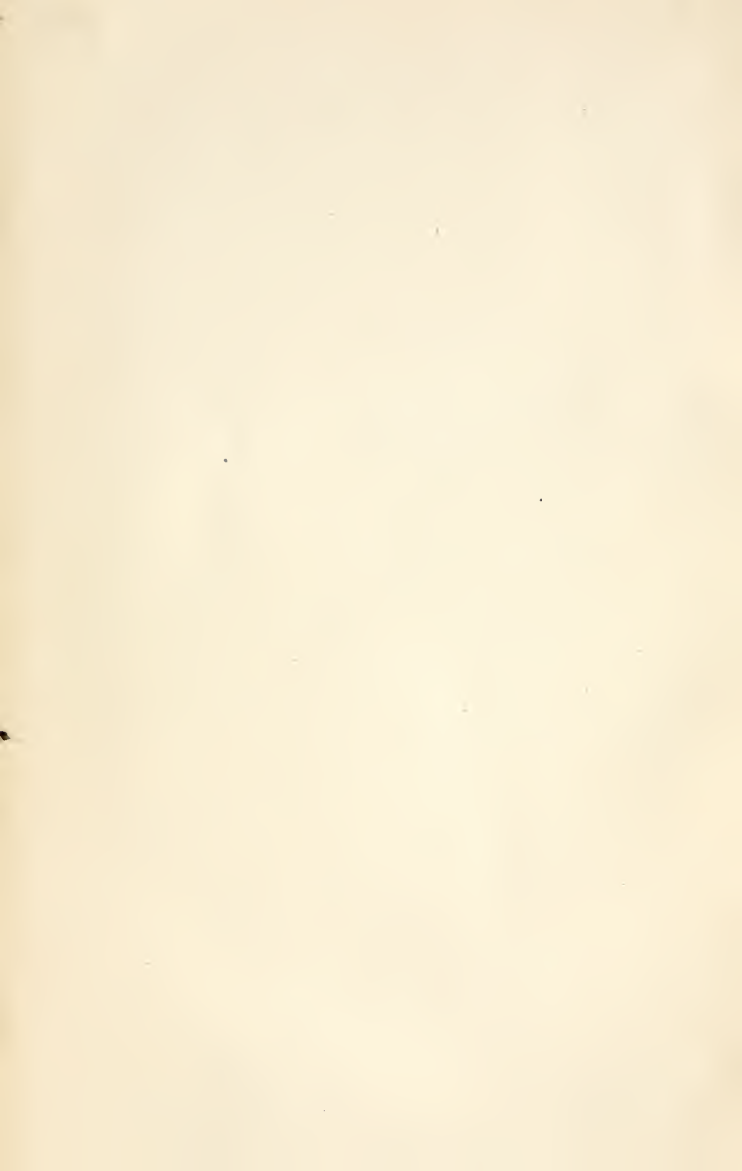


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A Hamilton

THE  
LIFE AND TIMES  
OF  
ALEXANDER HAMILTON.

BY

SAMUEL M. SMUCKER, A.M.,

AUTHOR OF "THE COURT AND REIGN OF CATHERINE II.," "EMPEROR  
NICHOLAS I.," "MEMORABLE SCENES IN FRENCH HISTORY," ETC.



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## P R E F A C E.

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THE want of a complete and satisfactory yet succinct and popular life of Alexander Hamilton, has long been felt by the reading public; and when we remember the very eminent position which he occupies in American history, it is somewhat singular that no attempt has been made to execute such a work. The Memoir published by his son, John C. Hamilton, is excellent as far as it goes; although it is not only unfinished, but is also too cumbersome and diffuse for the popular reader. The small work of Dr. Renwick, though well adapted to the purpose for which it was written, was necessarily very superficial and incomplete. I am not aware that any other reliable Memoir of Hamilton is in existence.

In the preparation of the following pages, I have freely used and appropriated all the sources of information which were accessible to me on the subject.

These include the most important publications which were cotemporary with the events narrated; together with all the published works of Hamilton, and the existing biographies of himself, his associates, and his opponents. The fierce passions and jealousies of that memorable era in which Hamilton figured and flourished, have now been laid to rest in the slumber of the tomb; and he who attempts at the present day to write the history of this great man, may claim at least one advantage over his predecessors—that he has no temptation from party prejudice and bias, either to color, exaggerate, or suppress the truth.

The remarkable incidents of Hamilton's career will never lose their singular power to attract and instruct mankind; for they furnish impressive illustrations both of the brightest and the basest elements of human character. The brightest all appertained to himself; the basest belonged to those by whom he was surrounded and assailed. Few men have ever lived whose virtues were so transcendent, whose motives were so disinterested, whose usefulness was so extensive and so permanent; yet there never lived a man against whom the envious,

the malicious, and the vile, fabricated so many baseless and absurd slanders, and illustrated by the aspersions which they cast upon him, and by the filthy slime of their hate with which they endeavored to pollute him, how despicable humanity in their own persons could become. To a very eminent degree Hamilton paid the natural penalty which superior genius and distinction must always suffer from the envious, the disappointed, and the obscure.

With the lapse of time the false impressions which once existed in reference to the political principles and personal qualities of the subject of this history, have gradually become, in a great measure, rectified. I have attempted in the following pages to aid in accomplishing this result. My endeavor has been to describe Hamilton precisely as he was; neither to set down aught in malice, nor yet unfairly to extenuate. I remembered the severe order given by Cromwell to the limner who executed his portrait, to paint him as he was, and not to omit the warts which embellished his stern visage. Such defects as Hamilton really possessed have not been overlooked. The

immortal statesman and orator would himself have directed his biographers thus to write of him, had he lived to guide and counsel them. And after having thus been true to history in exhibiting what may have been defective in the principles or the conduct of Hamilton, we are convinced that every impartial reader must admit that, if Washington is esteemed first in war, in peace, and in the hearts of his countrymen, Hamilton, beyond all question, deserves to be regarded as the second.

SAMUEL M. SMUCKER.

PHILADELPHIA, *November*, 1856.

# CONTENTS.

---

PREFACE.....	PAGE 5
--------------	-----------

## INTRODUCTION.

Mission of American Statesmen—First Colony Founded in America—Successive Establishment of all the American Colonies—Their Growth—The “Old French War”—Subsequent History of the Colonies—The Stamp Act—Conduct of the British Parliament—Outbreak of the Revolutionary Struggle—First Meeting of the Continental Congress—Declaration of American Independence—The Grand Drama begins.....	15
--	----

## CHAPTER I.

Birth of Alexander Hamilton—His Ancestors—His Early Schooling—Enters a Counting-house—Propitious Accident—Sails for New York—His Studies at Elizabethtown—He enters Columbia College—His Studious Habits and Progress—His First Public Oration—Its Effects and Promise of Future Success.....	25
---	----

## CHAPTER II.

Colonial Affairs in New York in 1774—Dr. Cooper—Dr. Ingles—Dr. Seabury—Hamilton’s First Political Pamphlet—Its Merits and Effects—Increase of Hamilton’s Fame—Incidents of 1775—He enters the Continental Army in 1776—Is appointed Private Secretary and Aide-Camp to Washington—Gains Washington’s entire Confidence—His Conduct in his New Sphere.....	34
---	----

## CHAPTER III.

	PAGE
Events of 1777—Conspiracy against Washington in the Army and in Congress—Hamilton's Mission to Gates—His Success—Events of 1778—Hamilton's Conduct at Monmouth—Lee's Retreat—Lee's Subsequent Court Martial—Hamilton's Growing Fame—His Popularity with the Army—Lafayette.....	59

## CHAPTER IV.

Events of 1780—Financial Difficulties of the Colonies—Hamilton's Financial Schemes—Robert Morris—Bank of United States Proposed—Hamilton's Letter to Robert Morris—French Aid sent to the Colonies—Causes of the Friendly Interposition of France—Treason of Arnold—Hamilton's Projects for the National Prosperity—His Letter to James Duane—Hamilton appointed Minister to France—He Declines.....	73
--	----

## CHAPTER V.

Marriage of Hamilton—Quarrel between Hamilton and Washington—Hamilton Retires from the Camp—His Plan of a National Bank—Writes the Continentalist—He Returns to the Camp—Incidents at Yorktown—Heroism of Hamilton at the Capture of Cornwallis—Glorious Results of that Victory—Hamilton Returns to Albany—Commences the Study of the Law—Is Appointed Receiver of Continental Taxes—His Admission to the Bar.....	91
---	----

## CHAPTER VI.

Hamilton Elected a Member of Congress—His Activity there—His Financial Expedients—Revolutionary Claims—Assists in Arranging the Preliminaries of Peace between the United States and Great Britain—Claims of the Continental Army on Congress—His Views on Taxation and Imports—Supports the Establishment of a Military Hospital—His Labors as Chairman of the Military Committee—Revolt among the Pennsylvania Troops of the Continental Army.....	122
--	-----

## CHAPTER VII.

	PAGE
Hamilton Returns to Albany—Resumes the Practice of the Law—Particulars Respecting the First Case—His Forensic Learning and Eloquence—His Publication of "Phocion"—Its Effects—He Drafts his Constitution of the Bank of New York—Hamilton's Views on the Subject of American Slavery—His Conduct in Reference to a Slave—Lafayette's Opinions on the same subject...	146

## CHAPTER VIII.

Establishment of the Society of the Cincinnati—Its Constitution and Purposes—Popular Prejudice against it—Jefferson's Opinions in Reference to it—The Convention at Annapolis—Hamilton's Activity and Influence in that Body—Is Elected a Member of the New York Legislature—His Labors there—Is the means of Establishing the New York University.....	161
---	-----

## CHAPTER IX.

Difficulties between the States of Vermont and New York—Hamilton's Speech on the Subject—A Federal Constitution Proposed by Hamilton—Condition and Wants of the Country—Articles of Confederation—Virginia Proposes a Federal Convention—Hamilton Chosen to Represent the State of New York in it—His Important Labors in that Convention—Drafts the Constitution of the United States—Provisions of that Constitution—Great Difficulties to be Overcome—Its Final Adoption.....	176
--	-----

## CHAPTER X.

The First Election of Federal Officers—Reluctance of Washington to accept the Presidency—His Letters on the subject—Washington is Elected President—State of Parties in the United States at that time—Selection of Washington's Cabinet—Hamilton chosen Secretary of the Treasury—His first Report on Public Credit—His Report on the Revenue—Origin of the Animosity between Hamilton and Jefferson—Hamilton's Report on a National Bank	
--	--



—Controversy respecting State Power and Federal Rights	PAGE
—Fierce conflicts in Washington's Cabinet—His attempt to Harmonize its Members.....	206

## CHAPTER XI.

The Authorship of the Federalist—Its Relative Position in American Literature—The Period of its Publication—Its General Scope and Purpose—Its Specific Parts or Subdivisions—Its General Conclusions and Results—its Peculiarities of Style—Its Clearness—Beauty—Logical Power—Metaphysical Profundity—Colossal Thoughts—Antithetical Force—Employs Contributions and Illustrations from every Department of Science—Influence of the Federalist on American Affairs—Its Foreign Fame and Influence—Its future Conservative Influence on the American Union.....	257
--	-----

## CHAPTER XII.

Proceedings of M. Genet—Remonstrance of the British Minister—Conflicts in the Cabinet—Opinion of Hamilton respecting Prizes taken in War—Le Petit Democrat—Hamilton's Report on the Public Credit—His various other Reports as Secretary of the Treasury—He Writes his celebrated Pacificus—Changes in Washington's Cabinet—Hamilton Resigns as Secretary of the Treasury—Opposition of Albert Gallatin to Washington—Hamilton Vindicates the President.....	282
--	-----

## CHAPTER XIII.

Charge of Official Fraud made against Hamilton—He Defends Himself—Affair of Maria Reynolds—Conspiracy to Extort Money—Perverted by Hamilton's Enemies to serve Party Purposes—His Final and Triumphant Vindication of Himself—Hamilton Devotes himself to the Labors of his Profession—Writes Camillus—Threatened War with France—Active Measures of Defense taken by the United States—The Difficulties Finally Adjusted—Hamilton Publishes Manlius and The Stand—He Writes Washington's Farewell Address.....	300
---	-----



## CHAPTER XIV.

PAGE

New York Political Parties—Their Origin and History— The Whigs and Tories—General Schuyler—George Clin- ton—Aaron Burr—His Political Career—Burr's Efforts in 1800 to Secure the Triumph of the Anti-federal Party in New York—Hamilton's Energetic Efforts to Defeat them—Burr Elected Vice-President of the United States —Death of Hamilton's Son in a Duel—Observations of Burr in reference to this Event.....	319
--	-----

## CHAPTER XV.

Growing Hostility between Burr and Hamilton—Their Re- spective Qualities and Dissimilarity of Character—Burr becomes a Candidate for the office of Governor of New York—He is Defeated by the Efforts of Hamilton—Communi- cation of Dr. Cooper—First Letter of Burr to Hamilton —Hamilton's Reply—The succeeding Correspondence be- tween them—Futile Efforts at Conciliation.....	330
---	-----

## CHAPTER XVI.

Burr's Explanation of his Grievances—Mr. Van Ness—Judge Pendleton—Hamilton's Honorable Concessions—Burr Challenges Hamilton—The Challenge Accepted—Further Attempts of Judge Pendleton to conciliate and avoid a Meeting—His Failure.....	342
---	-----

## CHAPTER XVII.

Hamilton Prepares for the Meeting—His Will—His Written Testimony against Duelling—Time and Place for the In- terview Appointed—Meeting of the Parties—Rules to Govern their Conduct—Hamilton falls.....	355
--	-----

## CHAPTER XVIII.

The Nature of Hamilton's Wound—He is Removed to the House of Mr. Bayard—His Interview with Dr. Mason— His Interview with Bishop Moore—He Receives the Lord's Supper—His Religious Opinions—His Last Inter- view with his Family—His Death—His Funeral—Oration	
---	--

of Gouverneur Morris—Universal Sorrow at his Death— Remarks of Burr on Hamilton's Death.....	366
---	-----

## CHAPTER XIX.

The Effects of Hamilton's Death—His Peculiar Intellectual Qualities—His Logical Powers—His Fertile Imagination —His Profound Learning—His Untiring Industry—His Abilities as a Writer—His Eloquence as a Speaker—His Moral Qualities—His Integrity—His Sincerity—His For- titude as a Soldier—His Unequaled Abilities as a States- man and Patriot—His Failings—His Duel with Burr— His Personal Appearance—Subsequent History of Mrs. Hamilton—Her Interview with Aaron Burr—Her Death —Fate of Burr.....	383
---	-----

# ALEXANDER HAMILTON

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## INTRODUCTION.

MISSION OF AMERICAN STATESMEN—FIRST COLONY FOUNDED IN AMERICA—SUCCESSIVE ESTABLISHMENT OF ALL THE AMERICAN COLONIES—THEIR GROWTH—THE “OLD FRENCH WAR”—SUBSEQUENT HISTORY OF THE COLONIES—THE STAMP ACT—CONDUCT OF THE BRITISH PARLIAMENT—OUTBREAK OF THE REVOLUTIONARY STRUGGLE—FIRST MEETING OF THE CONTINENTAL CONGRESS—DECLARATION OF AMERICAN INDEPENDENCE—THE GRAND DRAMA BEGINS.

THE genius and enterprise of Columbus discovered an unknown world; but it fell to the lot of other men to perform the noble task of adorning that world with the triumphs of civilization, with the trophies of art and science, with fair, stately, and enduring structures of civil and religious liberty. In the accomplishment of this mission, some of the most remarkable personages who ever lived were called into prominence and activity; and in the fulfillment of the destiny designated for them by Providence, they won for themselves undying names, and erected *monumenta ære perenniora*, which will engage and retain the admiration of

men in all coming time. One of the most distinguished of these was Alexander Hamilton.

As the life and abilities of this great man were devoted to the establishment of the government, and the attainment of the liberties of the American confederacy, it may not be inappropriate to preface the history of his remarkable career, by a brief survey of those events which immediately preceded his appearance on the scene of action, and which directly prepared the way for his own subsequent achievements.

The first attempt to found a colony in the new world was made by Sir Walter Raleigh, in the year 1585. It failed; but the enterprise was more successfully renewed by Captain John Smith, in Virginia, in 1607. That colony located at Jamestown was destined to live, though brought on several critical occasions to the verge of ruin. In the same year a small colony was also attempted on the Kennebec River, but it did not succeed. Yet the reports which were conveyed to England, in reference to the new continent, were the cause of the emigration of the Puritans, who, in 1620, founded the Plymouth colony in the province of Massachusetts. In 1636 the colony of Rhode Island was commenced by Roger Williams; and in the same year that of Connecticut was established by a clergyman

named Hooker, who, like Williams, was an emigrant and an exile from Massachusetts. In 1623 New Hampshire was first settled, Maine in 1635, Maryland in 1633, South Carolina in 1650, New York about 1600, New Jersey in 1664, and Pennsylvania in 1682. The other colonies were afterward founded and established at successive periods; sometimes by emigration from the older communities already named, and sometimes by direct emigration from the countries of Europe. Georgia was the last of the thirteen original colonies which was established, having been founded by General Oglethorp, in 1732.

During the progress of a century this family of incipient empires flourished together in harmony; gradually increasing their strength, numbers, and resources. The only foe with whom they had to contend were the fierce savages of the primitive wilds, whose ancient and untilled heritage they had rudely appropriated to themselves. Many dark and bloody scenes were enacted between the belligerent races, some of the thrilling details of which have now descended to oblivion; but stout hearts were often requisite in those primeval times, to resist undismayed the vengeance of the despoiled and enraged children of the forest.

In 1754 the first conflict with an external and

civilized foe took place. Then the old French war occurred between the British colonies, and those of the French, in Canada, and along the Mississippi. The question of boundary between England and France had, for many years, been a subject of useless and unavailing negotiation. The sword alone seemed able to solve the difficulty. In 1753 France endeavored, by establishing a chain of military posts along the Ohio River and the Lakes, to connect together their possessions in Canada with those on the Mississippi, and thus to confine the British colonists to a small and narrow territory along the Atlantic Ocean, and perhaps eventually even to expel them entirely from the country. Various conflicts ensued between the British and French colonial troops. In 1755 the memorable defeat of Braddock took place at Fort Du Quesne, and during three succeeding campaigns the French continued to triumph. On the accession of William Pitt to the British ministry in 1756, the tide of conquest was turned, the French were repeatedly routed, and in 1762, after hostilities had raged for eight years, a general peace was concluded, by which France ceded Canada to Britain; and Spain, unwilling to encounter the uncertainties of a conflict with a triumphant and formidable power, exchanged the Floridas for Cuba.



The British colonies then continued to flourish with increased prosperity; but a dark cloud began to hover over them. In 1765, under the auspices of Mr. Grenville, the British minister, the British parliament passed the celebrated and obnoxious Stamp Act, by which it was enacted that all legal instruments should be written only on stamped paper or parchment, in order to be valid. The price of this stamped paper was excessive; and during the seven months which elapsed before the act was ordered to take effect, the voice of murmur and discontent began to be heard in the American colonies. At first that discontent was uttered in whispers. It then became louder and louder. At length it sounded in thunder-tones, which reverberated over the whole length and breadth of the continent. The first organized resistance was made in the Virginia House of Burgesses. There, for the first time, the eloquent voice of Patrick Henry was heard, and he concluded his first speech in defense of American liberties, by declaring:—"That every individual who, by speaking or acting, should assert or maintain that any person or body of men, except the General Assembly of the province, had any right to impose taxation there, should be deemed an enemy to his majesty's colony." Soon the flame spread far and wide. The Assembly

of Massachusetts passed a resolution in favor of the meeting of a Continental Congress, and proposed a day for its convocation in the city of New York. The proposition was accepted by all the other colonies, excepting four, and their deputies assembled at the appointed time. But their measures were as yet indecisive; and they adjourned without having accomplished any thing, except the adoption of a Declaration of Rights.

When the time arrived for the Stamp Act to go into operation, it was generally disregarded throughout the colonies. Associations were formed against importing British manufactures until the law should be repealed. The lawyers were prohibited from commencing any suits for money due to any inhabitant of England. The consequence of these vigorous measures was that in March, 1766, the British parliament repealed the obnoxious law. But at the same time they passed an act authorizing duties on glass, paper, painters' colors, and tea imported into the colonies. The parliament doubtless supposed that if the colonists could abandon the use of stamped paper, they could not deny themselves the luxuries and conveniences of life. This measure only kindled the fires of opposition and rebellion still more fiercely than before. The Assembly of Massachusetts, having passed resolu-



tions exceeding in boldness and severity those of any other deliberative body in the colonies, were dissolved by George III. In 1768, Mr. Hancock's sloop *Liberty* was seized at Boston, for not having entered all the wines contained in her cargo; and British ships and regiments were sent to Boston to aid the British revenue officers. The colonies remained hostile and rebellious. This attitude of affairs induced the repeal, in 1770, of all the obnoxious duties, excepting that imposed upon tea. Large consignments of this article were sent by the British East India Company to several American ports. In New York and Philadelphia the popular fury prevented the attempt to discharge the cargoes. At Boston, the tea sent for the supply of that port being consigned to the particular friend of the British governor, Hutchinson, seemed to be in a fair way of delivery, when a party of patriots, disguised as Indians, boarded the ships, broke open the boxes and threw the contents into the sea.

The British parliament became enraged at this decisive step. They passed an act by which they closed the port of Boston, and removed its custom-house and trade to Salem. They remodeled the charter of the colony of Massachusetts, by which the whole executive government was taken from the people, and the nomination and appointment to

all important offices was vested in the crown. Thus the property, life and liberty of the colonists were subjected to the arbitrary caprice of the British monarch.

This act of outrageous and unwarranted despotism threw the whole continent into a blaze of patriotic indignation, which was increased when General Gage arrived at Boston, in 1774, with a large British force, with the avowed purpose of dragooning the rebellious inhabitants into submission. His troops took military possession of Boston, and fortified it. At this crisis all the colonies, then thirteen in number, determined to summon a Continental Congress, for the purpose of deliberating on the existing state of their affairs, and ascertaining what course they would in future pursue. The deputies met in Philadelphia on the 5th of September, 1774. Fifty-four delegates appeared, and took their seats in the first Continental Congress. They met in a now obscure building entitled Carpenter's Hall, which deserves the immortal honor of being the birthplace of the American republic. Peyton Randolph of Virginia was chosen president. Among them were found the Adamses, the Livingstons, the Henrys, the Lees, the Randolphs, the Rutledges, and the Jays. It was here that the matchless and thrilling eloquence of Patrick Henry

was first heard in the Congress of the nation. After its organization, he was the first to break the long and painful pause which ensued. He spoke, and the pathos and power of that great speech have been recorded and remembered by generations since, and the fame of it has gone forth over all the world. The Congress unanimously published a Declaration of Rights, formed an association not to import or use British goods, sent a petition to the King of England, published an address to the inhabitants of that kingdom, another to the residents of Canada, and a third to the citizens of the colonies.

Incensed by these decisive measures the British parliament, instead of retracing their steps or conciliating the malecontents, passed an act restraining the trade of the middle and southern colonies to Great Britain, Ireland, and the West Indies. This additional outrage aroused the patriotic indignation of the whole country. The day for the amicable adjustment of the difficulties between the colonies and the mother country had now passed by forever. Preparations were industriously made throughout all the States for conflict with the British forces, and soon the lurid flames of war were kindled. The first revolutionary blood was spilt at Lexington. That battle aroused the continent throughout the full extent of its countless vales,

its fertile plains, its pathless forests, and its mountain heights. The glorious struggle for liberty had in fact begun. In July, 1776, Congress proclaimed the Declaration of American Independence; and immediately afterward General Washington assumed the command of the continental army, then assembled around the British batteries at Boston. Another era of immortal deeds had dawned upon the world, and the chief actors were preparing to enter on the stage and play their destined parts.

## CHAPTER I.

BIRTH OF ALEXANDER HAMILTON—HIS ANCESTORS—HIS EARLY SCHOOLING—ENTERS A COUNTING-HOUSE—PROFITIOUS ACCIDENT—SAILS FOR NEW YORK—HIS STUDIES AT ELIZABETH-TOWN—HE ENTERS COLUMBIA COLLEGE—HIS STUDIOUS HABITS AND PROGRESS—HIS FIRST PUBLIC ORATION—ITS EFFECTS AND PROMISE OF FUTURE SUCCESS.

ALEXANDER HAMILTON was a native of the Island of Nevis, in the British West Indies. He was born on the eleventh day of January, 1759. His ancestors on the paternal side were Scotch; and were connected with the great clan of the Hamiltons, which has long possessed no inconsiderable consequence in Scottish history. His father had been reared in Scotland to mercantile pursuits; and being allured by the favorable prospects of trade which invited him to St. Christopher, he removed thither when comparatively young, and had there engaged in business.

Hamilton's mother was of French extraction, and was directly descended from one of those noble old Hugonots who, after the infamous revocation of the Edict of Nantes by Louis XIV., in 1685, had deserted his native land rather than basely betray his religion, and had sought a refuge and a home on one of the

blooming and verdant islands, which lie embosomed amid the western main. The mother of Hamilton was a woman of superior intelligence and rare beauty. When very young she had married a wealthy Dane, named Lavine, against her own wishes, at the instance of her family. But the parties were quite uncongenial in their tastes and characters; and the union proving a source of much misery to the lady, she applied for and obtained a divorce. She then removed to St. Christopher, and several years afterward became the wife of James Hamilton, and the mother of Alexander.

Whilst he was very young, Hamilton's mother unfortunately died, and left him to the charitable care and protection of her relatives. They did not neglect the trust, and sent the orphan boy to school at Vera Cruz. His father was at that time very much impoverished, and he remained in that condition until his death in 1799. Alexander, who was diminutive for his age, was entirely dependent on his mother's relatives not only for support, but also for the future guidance of his life. Yet at this early period the superior intelligence of the child attracted general attention; and those who were interested in his fate already began to indulge hopes of a brighter future for him, than the misfortunes of the commencement of his career had seemed to presage.



Yet the extent of his literary advantages was very limited. His schooling did not long continue. He had the good fortune at that time to enlist the charitable regard of a Presbyterian clergyman named Knox, and from him he received some useful instruction and many valuable hints. These were of great service to a youth so intelligent and so ardent in the pursuit of knowledge as Hamilton; but he was compelled by circumstances to relinquish his studies in 1769, and enter the counting-house of Nicholas Cruger at Vera Cruz. In this situation he devoted himself attentively to the details of business; and his superior abilities and probity soon secured him the confidence of his employer. At the age of fourteen he was intrusted by him with the entire care of his establishment, during his absence on a visit to the United States in 1770.

Nevertheless during the period of Hamilton's connection with Mr. Cruger, his active and inquiring mind was not content with the mere details and responsibilities of business, but he employed his leisure in extending his knowledge. He studied mathematical science, chemistry, history, and general literature. He seemed to be conscious that a higher destiny awaited him, than that which lay immediately before and around him; and he was assiduous in the acquisition of knowledge and the

training of those superior faculties whose mighty and restless energies he already felt working within him.

While thus uncertain as to his future destiny, an accident occurred which immediately gave it a paramount and an appropriate direction. In 1772 a furious and destructive tornado, such as the tropical climes alone experience, swept over the Leeward Islands of the West Indies, carrying ruin and desolation along its pathway. The stoutest hearts were appalled by the fearful havoc which ensued; and while the public mind was still filled with awe and consternation at its effects, a description of the hurricane and of its consequences appeared in the public journal of the Island of St. Christopher.

In this event originated the future greatness and celebrity of Hamilton. The description in question was written with such ability, and bore throughout such unquestionable evidences of a superior intellect, that it attracted universal attention, and inquiries were industriously made for its author. When it was discovered that a lad so young, so small, so friendless as Hamilton, had penned that powerful production, the interest was increased tenfold; and many friends arose around him who offered to send him to the United States in order to complete his education. He gladly embraced the opportunity. He



received letters of introduction from Mr. Knox to Dr. Mason and other distinguished clergymen in New York, and ample means were furnished him for his immediate support. In October, 1772, he sailed from the West Indies; bade farewell to the home of his childhood; and set foot on that land with whose rising splendors his own name and fame were destined afterward to become so closely and so honorably identified.

Having arrived in New York and presented his letters of introduction, Hamilton concluded, in accordance with the advice of his friends, to commence his studies at the Grammar-school of Elizabethtown, then ably conducted by Francis Barber. His industry and application here were such as to warrant the brightest prospects of his future success. In winter he frequently continued his studies till midnight. In summer the early hour of six found him intently at his books. Scarcely a year elapsed before he was deemed fit, by his instructors, to enter college. He accordingly visited Dr. Witherspoon, at that time president of Princeton College, for the purpose of being admitted to the Freshman class. Hamilton however desired to make one condition with the faculty of the college, preliminary to his matriculation,—a condition which furnishes singular evidence both of his attainments, of his future pur-

poses of application, and of his confidence in the success of his endeavors. He wished to stipulate that he might be permitted to advance from one class to another, not by the usual gradations of progress but with as much rapidity as his improvement in learning would enable him to do. This proviso was in opposition to the usages and rules of the college; for if it were granted to one, it might be demanded by many; and such an arrangement would soon throw all the classes into confusion. In refusing his application Dr. Witherspoon however added, that he regretted the necessity which prevented him from complying with Mr. Hamilton's request, "inasmuch as he was convinced that the young gentleman would do honor to any seminary in which he should be educated."

Hamilton proceeded from Princeton to New York, and there entered the institution now known as Columbia College. In addition to the usual collegiate course he studied anatomy. He then thought it not improbable that he might devote his future life to the profession of medicine. He is represented as being, even at this early period of his life, unusually devout; that he was regular in his attendance on public worship; that he prayed night and morning on his knees; that his prayers were marked by unusual eloquence and fervor; and that

he was a firm and sincere believer in the truth and divine origin of Christianity. One of his poetical productions at this time was a hymn entitled the "Soul entering into bliss." Yet he was remarkable also for the cheerfulness and elasticity of his temper, and was not reluctant occasionally to enter into every species of innocent and honorable amusement.

But the most stirring and portentous times were now approaching in the land of his adoption; and while Hamilton was still a member of the college, his great talents were drawn out into active play by the force of unexpected circumstances, while yet a mere youth. At the early age of seventeen he took his place prominently among American orators and patriots; and his great political and national career may be said to have commenced before he left the quiet and contemplative shades of the academy.

The circumstances of the case were these. In the year 1769, the colony of New York, like the rest of the nation, was in a state of intense excitement. Resistance to the increasing tyranny of the British crown had already begun. Furious conflicts daily arose between the incensed populace and the civil and military powers of the colony. A duty having been laid on tea, the British ministry deter-

mined that none of that article should be imported except through the East India Company, whose privileges were exorbitant. The people determined to resist this arbitrary enactment—the forerunner, as they justly feared, of other and more detestable encroachments on their liberties. The British ministers then took the first step of retaliation, and, as we have said, closed the port of Boston—an act of the most ruinous tyranny. A resolution being formed to summon a general Continental Congress, to take into consideration the existing evils and the peculiar state of the country, delegates were to be elected to this Congress from the State of New York. The republicans or patriots desired that these delegates should be chosen by the whole mass of the people. The British ministry claimed the exclusive right to nominate them. On July 6th, 1774, a great assembly of the people was held in the suburbs of the city of New York, and this meeting at last determined to take decisive steps. But harmony of sentiment did not by any means pervade the assembly. The ministry were not without the aid of their hired representatives among its members present; and the discussions were both animated, hostile, and bitter.

It was on this interesting and important occasion that Alexander Hamilton, then seventeen years of

age, ventured to come forward to address the multitude. At first, the youthful appearance and diminutive form of the orator, operated strongly against him. He also displayed that modesty and hesitation of manner which is usually an attendant of the first inexperienced efforts of great oratorical abilities. But he had not proceeded far in his address before he recovered his self-confidence, and then the vigor of his thoughts, the clearness and precision of his language, the force of his reasoning, his eloquence, his pathos, his persuasive power, as well as the singular appropriateness of his delivery, commanded the most intense admiration. When he concluded his speech, his ability and fame had been placed beyond the reach of dispute or question; and he became at once a person of consequence, around whom the future hopes and interests of the patriots clustered. He was thenceforward known in New York as the "eloquent collegian." Yet notwithstanding this flattering opening of his public career, Hamilton still retained for the present his connection with the college, and continued to pursue his studies there with his former earnestness and diligence.

## CHAPTER II.

COLONIAL AFFAIRS IN NEW YORK IN 1774—DR. COOPER—DR. INGLES—DR. SEABURY—HAMILTON'S FIRST POLITICAL PAMPHLET—ITS MERITS AND EFFECTS—INCREASE OF HAMILTON'S FAME—INCIDENTS OF 1775—HE ENTERS THE CONTINENTAL ARMY IN 1776—IS APPOINTED PRIVATE SECRETARY AND AID-DE-CAMP TO WASHINGTON—GAINS WASHINGTON'S ENTIRE CONFIDENCE—HIS CONDUCT IN HIS NEW SPHERE.

DURING 1774 the political excitement in New York became more and more intense. In September of that year the Congress had assembled in Philadelphia, and measures of resistance to George III. had been deliberated on and adopted. The community had become divided into two great parties; but in New York, as elsewhere, the patriots were vastly in the majority. The chief supporters of British despotism and supremacy were the Episcopal clergy, who derived their appointments and their livings from the crown, and who had been taught to regard the king as supreme head both of the church and state.

A written controversy now ensued on the subject of colonial affairs in New York, and a series of pamphlets were issued on both sides of the dispute. It was in this controversy, in which some



of the ablest men then living participated, that the youthful Hamilton won his second wreath of laurels, and received the meed of well-deserved renown. Rev. Dr. Cooper, the president of King's or Columbia College, published a labored defense of the acts of the British monarch. He was followed on the same side by Dr. Ingles, father of the subsequent Bishop of Nova Scotia, Dr. Chandler, Dr. Wilkins, and Dr. Seabury, afterward Bishop of Connecticut. On the side of the people were found Governor Livingston of New Jersey, Mr. John Jay, and Mr. Hamilton, all of whom put forth in reply pamphlets of equal power, and of superior truth and conclusiveness. Dr. Seabury published his "Free Thoughts on the Proceedings of the Continental Congress." Dr. Wilkins wrote his "Congress Canvassed by a West Chester Farmer." Mr. Hamilton, several weeks after the appearance of the latter, published "A Full Vindication of the Measures of Congress from the Calumnies of their Enemies, in answer to a letter under the signature of A West Chester Farmer, whereby his sophistry is exposed, his cavils confuted, his artifices detected, and his wit ridiculed, in a general address to the inhabitants of America, and a patricular address to the farmers of the province of New York. Printed by James Livingston, 1774."

The character of Hamilton's style as a writer, at this early period, may be inferred from the following short extract from this essay:—"Tell me not of the British commons, lords, ministers, ministerial tools, placemen, pensioners, parasites—I scorn to let my life and property depend upon the pleasure of any of them. Give me the steady, uniform, unshaken security of constitutional freedom—give me the right of trial by a jury of my own neighbors, and to be taxed by my own representatives only. What will become of the laws and courts of justice without this? The shadow may remain, but the substance will be gone. I would die to preserve the law upon a solid foundation; for, take away liberty, and the foundation is destroyed."

The West Chester Farmer soon replied to this pamphlet in terms of great bitterness and severity. This brought out an answer again from Hamilton, more lengthy and elaborate than the first. It was a pamphlet of seventy-eight pages, entitled "The Farmer Refuted; or, a more Comprehensive and Impartial View of the Disputes between Great Britain and the Colonies, and intended as a Further Vindication of the Congress. By a Sincere Friend to America. 1775."

The great ability displayed in these several pamphlets, their calm and sagacious spirit, and the



clear conviction which they carried to every impartial mind, attracted universal attention. Their author was at first unknown. By some they were attributed to Governor Livingston, by others to Mr. Jay; and the great fame of these distinguished men was even augmented by their supposed authorship of these productions. Dr. Cooper, president of the very institution in which Hamilton was then a pupil, insisted that Mr. Jay must be, and alone could have been, their author. When it was hinted that Alexander Hamilton, a youth of eighteen, was suspected by some to have written them, he treated the suggestion as absurd in the extreme. Nevertheless the truth came out at last; and it was proved by Messrs. Troup and Mulligan, two associates of Hamilton to whom he had read a portion of the manuscript, that he alone was the author.

It may readily be supposed that the public announcement of this established fact, added greatly to the fame of the youthful aspirant. He was universally regarded as an intellectual prodigy; and bright hopes were not unreasonably entertained that one possessed of such superior gifts, and such rare ability to use them, would yet attain high eminence. He then received the honorable title of the "Vindicator of the Congress."

A sublime and imposing epoch had now arrived

in history. During several centuries the North American continent had been gradually filling up with immigrants from various countries of the old world, but especially from the British empire. The colonists found these realms a vast wilderness, inhabited only by rude and ferocious savages. For many years they lived and toiled surrounded by great perils, with the bloody tomahawk constantly hanging over their heads, and the terrific war-whoop ever resounding in their ears. Shut out from all frequent or easy intercourse with the civilized world, they endeavored to develop the rich resources of their adopted home. They planted and tilled. They felled the sturdy giants of the forest. They sowed, reaped and built. And soon a fair and fertile paradise arose around them, blooming with natural and artificial loveliness, to reward their faithful industry, and to bless them and their children with the rich fruition of all that men most highly cherish. They had left behind them, beyond the rolling main, the detested fetters of the tyrants under whom their forefathers had groaned; and no footmark of a despot had ever yet polluted the virgin land of their adoption. Already faint glimpses of the coming splendor and glory of this new world illumined the horizon, streamed across the distant Atlantic, and attracted the attention of European monarchs. The sovereign of Eng-

land especially, was strongly moved. The majority of the colonists had been, and were even still, his subjects. He thought their prosperity deserved and invited taxation. They should not be exempt from the ponderous burdens under which all his other subjects groaned. He laid heavy taxes, and refused at the same time the coördinate right of representation. The injured colonists, who had now at last struggled through sufferings, perils, and toils innumerable, up to the possession of wealth, consequence, and power, without the least assistance and protection from the mother country, began to show signs of restlessness and dissatisfaction. Soon a storm of patriotic indignation burst forth over the whole land. The thirteen colonies became agitated like a wild and heaving ocean, and the horizon was overhung with dark and fearful portents. The sleeping spirit of Hampden and Cromwell was aroused. The threatenings of enraged and besotted kings were defied; and zealous patriots might be seen flying to and fro in hot haste, proclaiming the necessity of unyielding resistance to foreign oppression; while here and there might be heard, amid the discordant tumult, the savage night-yell of cowardice and conservatism. A deadly conflict was inevitable; a conflict on the issue of which depended the fate of countless mil-

lions yet unborn, and of vast realms then just struggling into political existence.

As may readily be supposed, the outbreak of the American Revolution attracted the attention of the whole civilized world. Nor was that attention shunned by those who had determined to throw off the supremacy of England. They proclaimed to the world that they held it as self-evident truths that all men are created free and equal, and that all men possess the inalienable right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. They boldly set forth the outrages which the King of Great Britain had already inflicted, and still purposed to inflict, upon them; how he had attempted to establish an absolute tyranny over them; how he had withheld his assent to the most useful and necessary laws; how he had refused them the right of representation, and had, yet imposed on them heavy taxes; how he had dissolved their representative assemblies for resisting his unjust invasions of their liberty; how he had endeavored to prevent the population of the States, and had put forth his utmost efforts to restrict immigration; and how, by many other base acts of hostility to their interests, and tyranny over their rights, he had rendered himself their uncompromising and eternal foe. They concluded by pledging their lives, their fortunes, and their sacred honor to

the support of the cause in which they had engaged. Europe especially gazed with profound attention on the conflict about to commence. Her inhabitants, bound in heavy chains, viewed it with silent and unuttered but ardent hope for the patriots. Her tyrants, trembling on their rotten thrones, regarded its progress and issue with painful doubt and apprehension. The great problem of these latter ages was now about to be solved; whether the long night of tyranny was ever to end over the civilized world, and whether the glorious morn of hope and freedom was destined at length to dawn, and dispel the gloom of many centuries.

Washington having been chosen by the Continental Congress as commander-in-chief of all the armies of the United Colonies, at once accepted the important and difficult trust. He refused all compensation for his services; but stated that he would keep an account of his actual expenditures during the continuance of his office, which, as he supposed, Congress would eventually repay.

Yet it must be confessed that the prospects of the revolutionists were not very encouraging. To confront the gigantic power of England,—then assuredly the first nation in Europe and confessedly the mistress of the seas,—the confederate colonies mustered in the camp at Cambridge fourteen thou-



sand, five hundred men. But even this insignificant force was rendered in a great measure inefficient by other serious disadvantages. They were in want of ammunition. The magazines could furnish but nine cartridges for each man. The troops were almost destitute of clothing, and also of tents. Their arms were inferior in quality and deficient in number. Only a small proportion either of the officers or of the men had ever received much military training, or were familiar with military tactics.

Yet none of these great disadvantages discouraged the new commander. He busily set himself to work to improve the condition and the training of his troops. Boston was then occupied by the British army under General Gage, and soon the town was closely blockaded by the American troops. In January, 1776, Washington summoned a council of war, and proposed to their consideration the project of making a general assault. The decision was favorable to the attempt; and as a preparatory step he fortified the heights of Dorchester, in order to annoy the British ships in the harbor, and assail the town. On the 2d of March Washington began a general bombardment of the British lines. So vigorously was this effected during the two succeeding weeks, that the British commander determined at length to evacuate his dangerous and untenable position.

This purpose was carried into effect on the 17th of March; and the troops, marching forth from their intrenchments, embarked on board the fleet, and sailed from Nantasket road. Thus complete success attended the exertions of the American commander, in the first important scene of his career. One of the chief cities of the colonies was released from the grasp of the foe; and fortune, which ever smiles upon the brave, seemed to be propitious to the patriots.

On evacuating Boston, General Howe had sailed for Halifax. From that port he directed his course to the city of New York. On the 3d of July he disembarked his forces on Staten Island, and found the inhabitants strongly in favor of British rule. At this period, large reinforcements arrived from England, and the invading army numbered about twenty-five thousand regular troops. To this well-fed, well-trained, vigorous and efficient force, Washington had but seventeen thousand men to oppose, three thousand of whom were on the sick list. Yet with this great disproportion in numbers, the American general prepared to meet the British in a general engagement.

The battle of Brooklyn ensued. The two armies were drawn out in the best manner which the exceedingly irregular nature of the ground permitted.



There was indeed but little of that gorgeous display of military power and splendor, which attended the great engagements in which Marlborough and Napoleon commanded. The appearance of the Continental troops especially was scarcely more martial or imposing than that of well-regulated militia. On the 27th August, at half past eight, the battle began. The immense extent of ground over which the combatants were scattered, rendered the movements of the day exceedingly irregular and indecisive. The American troops in various quarters were broken, driven back, and hemmed in by the skillful marches and counter-marches of the British regulars. They were pursued to and fro alternately by the Hessians and the English, and many were slain, wounded, and captured. It was a disastrous day for the Americans. One thousand and ninety-seven prisoners were made by the British, among whom were Generals Sullivan, Stirling, and Woodhull. Probably the entire loss of the Americans may have amounted to two thousand men, that of the British to four hundred.

On the night of the 28th of August, Washington retreated from Long Island. This retreat was conducted in the most admirable order, and with such superior skill that all the stores of the Americans

and their ammunition were secured, notwithstanding the utmost vigilance of the British outposts. Washington has been severely censured by military men for the conduct and the issue of this disastrous day. But their strictures are undeserved. The object of Washington was to defend the city of New York from the British troops; and at the same time to waste away the campaign in movements which, even if they were not decisively in favor of his troops, would harass and dishearten his assailants. An indecisive battle would help to accomplish this result. But the real cause of the disaster of Brooklyn was the want of cavalry in the Continental army. There was not a single troop of horse among them. All those operations, both of offense and defense, in which celerity of movement was of essential importance, were necessarily impossible. And besides all this, the British troops had vastly the advantage in numbers, in discipline, in ammunition, and in position. The influence of this defeat on the public mind was most discouraging. The popular enthusiasm was much diminished. The American troops immediately evacuated New York, and the British entered it. Washington still retreated, and took possession of a favorable position at White Plains. He was indefatigable in his exertions to discipline, accoutre,

and encourage his troops; and in some few skirmishes, which took place between separate detachments of both parties, the Americans obtained the advantage.

On the 25th of October, General Howe determined to attack Washington in his fortified position at White Plains. The militia in the American army fled upon the first assault of the British. The regular troops made a longer resistance; but they too eventually retreated, though in good order. The victory again belonged to the British. Washington prudently continued to retire, while General Howe made his preparations to invade New Jersey. Two important garrisons—those of Fort Lee and Fort Washington, lay in his route, which it behooved him to take. After a spirited resistance both of these fortresses surrendered to the assailants. The garrison which manned Fort Washington became prisoners of war. During Washington's further retreat through New Jersey he was compelled to sacrifice his heavy cannon and military stores. The position and prospects of the patriots had already, at the termination of the second campaign, become apparently desperate. Posted at Newark, Washington endeavored to concentrate at one point the scattered troops of the different colonies—some from Massachusetts, some from Connecticut, some

from Pennsylvania. It was the 1st of December, 1776, and never did a more gloomy future seem to appal a commander. The American forces from the first had been inferior to their opponents in every respect—in numbers, in ammunition, in discipline, and in experience. At that moment the continued series of disasters which had occurred subsequent to the evacuation of Boston, had depressed the spirits of the whole people, as well as of the army, to the lowest ebb. The same patriots who, at the commencement of the conflict had been ardent, enthusiastic, and confident, now began seriously to despair of the republic. At this moment also the period of the enlistment of a large portion of the Continental troops expired, and whole companies, in spite of the utmost exertions of Washington, disbanded and returned home. It was confidently expected that, in a few weeks, the whole army would dwindle away and disappear. Those who remained in camp seemed to be in constant danger of being surrounded and destroyed by the much larger force mustered by the British. Then Philadelphia would immediately become the prey of the triumphant invaders. Worse than all this, there was foul treason even in the patriot camp. General Howe had issued a proclamation insuring pardon and immunity to all who, within sixty days, would renew

their allegiance to the British king. An insurrection soon occurred in Monmouth county, New Jersey, against the Continental government; and even several American generals, who had previously stood high in the confidence of the commander-in-chief, of Congress, and of the whole country, began perfidiously to tamper with British officials, and to take steps preparatory to making a transfer of their allegiance from the ruined and subjugated colonial government to the now victorious and resistless English despot.

In this dark hour of disaster and gloom Washington preserved his serenity, his confidence, and his hope. He readily perceived that some decisive movement was absolutely necessary to inspire confidence again into the people and the army, and he determined to make it. It was then the middle of winter. His shattered and broken army lay in their feeble and hastily prepared works on the Pennsylvania side of the Delaware. He formed the daring plan of attacking several of the British posts on the Delaware, in New Jersey, at the same moment, so as to deliver Philadelphia from the impending danger of invasion, and compel the British to release New Jersey from the grasp in which they then held it. The latter were posted at Trenton, Bordentown, Mount Holly, and the White



Horse, though large divisions were also placed at Princeton, Brunswick, and Elizabethtown. On the night of the 25th of December the cold was intense, and the earth was deluged with sleet, snow and hail. General Washington resolved on this night to march in person with one division of his army, consisting of twenty-five hundred men, upon the British posted in Trenton. General Irvine was directed to cross the Delaware opposite Trenton, and secure the bridge below the town; while General Cadwallader was ordered to cross at Dunk's Ferry, and attack the British at Mount Holly. All these movements were to be accomplished simultaneously, with secrecy and celerity; and had the plans of the commander-in-chief been promptly carried out, their success would have been complete and overpowering. The chief obstacle was the state of the ice and of the weather, which impeded the troops in their attempt to cross the Delaware. In the end, that portion alone of the American army which Washington himself led, was able to effect a passage in time, and with this portion alone he achieved a brilliant victory. He reached the British position at Trenton at eight in the morning, and instantly commenced an attack with the utmost fury and impetuosity. The British soon began to waver, then to flee. Washington

intercepted them in their flight, and after a brisk conflict compelled them to surrender. About one thousand of them were made prisoners, fifty were killed and wounded. Among the number of the slain was Colonel Rawle, their commander. So intense was the cold that two American soldiers were frozen to death. Five hundred British escaped from the lower end of Trenton, in consequence of the failure of that portion of the plan intrusted to General Irvine. The condition of the river also rendered it impossible for General Cadwallader to transport his artillery over it, and accordingly he was compelled to relinquish his design on Mount Holly.

The victory of Washington at Trenton was complete. He had accomplished, in the dead of winter, one of the most daring and successful feats recorded in military annals. He had even surprised the vigilant and able commanders who led the British veterans, and had taken captive a large and important portion of their army. But his career of success did not terminate here. One of the strongest positions of the foe was at Princeton. Washington pressed forward to attack them. The battle of Princeton ensued, in which the British were totally defeated—one hundred were killed, and three hundred taken prisoners. The chief loss of the Americans was in the death of General Mercer.



Lord Cornwallis, the British commander, endeavored immediately after this success, to assail and crush the patriot army before they could reach Brunswick, which was their next object of attack. Under these circumstances, Washington deemed it prudent to abandon this portion of his bold design. His exhausted troops were without blankets, without provisions, and many of them were barefooted, and marked their painful progress over the frozen earth, with the traces of their blood. He therefore retired into shelter at Morristown for the rest of the winter.

These heroic and triumphant operations of Washington and his co-patriots, revived at once the drooping spirits of the colonies. Joy and hope illumed that gloomy horizon which had settled down so sadly over the whole nation. The British officers and men were astonished at these displays of unexpected vigor and bravery; and their commander began seriously to reflect upon the difficulty of subjugating a people, whose army—few, ragged, naked, without ammunition and without provisions, could rise in the midst of winter, invested with such desperate and resistless power, and strike so fatal a blow upon their confident and well-appointed foes. The patriots were filled with encouragement and hope; while the covert and yet undeclared traitors

in their camp, thought it advisable still to dissemble for a time their infamous purposes, and postpone the consummation of their perfidy until a more propitious hour.

It was in June, 1775, that Hamilton published his pamphlet, entitled "Remarks on the Quebec Bill," the object of which production was to show that the British ministry had abandoned all regard to the principles of the English constitution, and were prepared to commit the greatest outrages on the liberties of the colonies; and he illustrated his subject by an allusion to some of the measures adopted in reference to the government of the British province of Canada. This essay displayed the same superior traits of mind which had marked its predecessors, and still added to his fame.

Hamilton, at this stirring period, took part also in the public deliberative assemblies of the people in New York. Congress having declared their determination to resist British tyranny by force of arms, and having appealed to the colonies for their support, Hamilton immediately commenced the study of military tactics, and joined a volunteer corps commanded by Major Fleming, who had formerly been in the British service. This company having been commanded by the people to remove the cannon from the Battery, Hamilton aided in

the work; and while so doing a companion was shot down by his side, from the British vessel in the harbor, which endeavored to prevent the execution of their purpose. Meanwhile he continued his studies in the military art, aided by a British bombardier, who instructed him in pyrotechnics and gunnery.

In January, 1776, he joined an artillery company which had been raised in New York, and in a few weeks he received the rank of "Captain of the Provincial Company of Artillery." A portion of the last remittance which he received from his generous friends in Vera Cruz, he appropriated to the recruiting of this company. In September, 1776, he entered active service at the battle on Brooklyn Heights; and in the retreat of the American lines on that disastrous day, as already narrated, he performed the difficult service of bringing up the rear, having lost his baggage and a field-piece.

From Brooklyn the broken army of the Americans retired to Harlem, near New York. It having been determined that a stand should here be made, Hamilton commenced instantly to fortify his portion of the line. While actively superintending and assisting in this work, he was thrown for the first time in contact with the commander-in-chief. Entering into conversation with the young engineer,

while thus engaged, the penetrating eye of Washington soon detected his superior abilities and energy; and he invited Hamilton to visit him in his *marquée*. This was the commencement of that faithful friendship which afterward continued unabated between these remarkable men, during so many dark years of uncertainty and vicissitude, and during those brighter ones of triumph and splendor which happily succeeded.

In the important events which ensued, Hamilton took a prominent and honorable share. At the battle of White Plains his gallantry again attracted the attention of the commander-in-chief. When the harassed and broken army of the patriots retreated to North Castle, Hamilton was placed in command of an important post near Fort Washington, and did something to stem the tide of the conquerors. When Fort Washington fell, Hamilton proposed to Washington to attempt its recapture with a small body of troops; but the desperate though patriotic rashness of his plans induced the prudent chief to decline it. In this gloomy hour of American history, when triumph after triumph had infused an arrogant hope into the British officers and soldiers, and their opponents were almost driven to despair, Washington conceived and executed the brilliant enterprises of Trenton and Princeton. In

these important actions, and especially in that of Princeton, Hamilton's services were of great value. As the American troops were retiring toward New Brunswick, they were pursued by the British under Lord Cornwallis. The Americans were but three thousand in number; they had exhausted their ammunition; many were but half clothed; and many even were unarmed. The British host numbered eight thousand men, well-fed, well-accoutred, and inflated with arrogant assurances of victory. As the rear of the ragged Americans was crossing the Raritan, the British van appeared in sight. At this crisis Hamilton effected a diversion in favor of the patriot army by planting his artillery on a high ground which commanded the ford of the river, and playing so effectively on the British lines as to delay their progress, and enable Washington to make good his retreat. When the American army went into winter quarters at Morristown, on March 1st, 1777, Hamilton was justly rewarded for his services by the appointment of aid-de-camp and private secretary to Washington, with the rank of lieutenant-colonel.

The duties which devolved upon Hamilton in this new sphere, were onerous and important. The high estimate of his abilities already formed by Washington induced him to intrust to Hamilton

not merely the subordinate functions usually devolving upon his aids, but those of a higher and more difficult character. He was invited to assist in arranging the plans of the campaigns; in devising means for the concentration, increase and support of the army; and in confirming the resolution and unity of the various portions of the confederacy. The intelligence, sagacity and integrity of Hamilton, had already won the full confidence of Washington—of a man remarkable for his reserve and prudence; a man of whom it has been said, that no one could ever boast of having been on familiar terms with him; a man whose prevailing sobriety and caution were so great, that he was rarely or never known to laugh. To Hamilton alone Washington confided the most difficult and elaborate communications which emanated from head-quarters, both to Congress and to private citizens, which he did not himself compose. “The pen of our army,” says Troup, “was held by Hamilton; and for dignity of manner, pith of matter, and elegance of style, General Washington’s letters are unrivaled in military annals.”

Hamilton also corresponded largely with patriots in the State of New York, who, knowing his influence with the commander-in-chief, and his own superior sagacity, conferred with him, at the instance of the Convention, in reference to their prospects and



condition. From the camp at Morristown Hamilton wrote letters full of prudent advice and counsel to Robert R. Livingston, who had been appointed by the Convention to correspond with him. This incident furnishes a convincing proof of the very high position which had already been attained by this youthful exile of the age of twenty-one.

Nor amid these stirring scenes did Hamilton forget his kind friends in the land of his birth. They viewed his advancement in life with constant watchfulness and interest, notwithstanding the remoteness of their position. To the Reverend Mr. Knox he wrote in July, 1777, describing the state of the contest, the plans and purposes of each of the combatants, and dwelling upon the probable aid of France, and the final issue of the struggle. These letters are evidences of the fact that, though he loved his adopted country well, he had not forgotten those who, in the hour of his need, had so kindly befriended him.

In August, 1777, Hamilton was sent to Congress to confer, on behalf of Washington, with that body upon the propriety of either an attack upon New York, then held by the British, or a decisive movement on the Hudson to oppose the advance of Burgoyne. While this deliberation was pending, a British fleet appeared off the Capes of Virginia. This fact proved that an attack on Philadelphia was



contemplated by the enemy. To protect that important city Washington took post at the Forks of the Brandywine; and the battle of that name ensued between him and General Howe. In the retreat which followed this defeat, Hamilton, in the heroic performance of his duty, was placed in a position of imminent peril, and his escape from death was deemed almost miraculous. He attempted to destroy a small store of provisions which lay on the Schuylkill, in the route of the victorious British. While thus engaged, the enemy suddenly came upon him. Hamilton and four of his men retreated to a boat on the river, entered it, and commenced to row for their lives. While thus employed volley after volley were discharged into the boat, and three out of the five who occupied it were wounded, before they escaped beyond the reach of the enemy's fire. After this adventure, Hamilton was dispatched by Washington to Philadelphia, for the purpose of raising contributions to the future support of the army from the ladies of that city. He addressed them a letter, which has always been much admired for the superiority and brilliancy of its style. Its success was in the highest degree encouraging. Hamilton spent the winter of 1777 with Washington in his quarters on the eastern bank of the Schuylkill above Philadelphia; and was present in the indecisive engagement at Germantown.

## CHAPTER III.

EVENTS OF 1777—CONSPIRACY AGAINST WASHINGTON IN THE ARMY AND IN CONGRESS—HAMILTON'S MISSION TO GATES—HIS SUCCESS—EVENTS OF 1778—HAMILTON'S CONDUCT AT MONMOUTH—LEE'S RETREAT—LEE'S SUBSEQUENT COURT-MARTIAL—HAMILTON'S GROWING FAME—HIS POPULARITY WITH THE ARMY—LAFAYETTE.

THE year 1777 is remarkable in the history of the American Revolution, as the one in which conspiracy was formed and carried to a considerable length against the commander-in-chief of the continental armies.

The origin of this base cabal is to be found in the unjust dissatisfaction of the community at the repeated defeats which the army under Washington had suffered, and in the unprincipled ambition of General Gates, the fortunate conqueror of General Burgoyne. The American people in this instance forgot, to some extent, their usual sense of justice and reason; for they blamed Washington because Philadelphia and New York had fallen into the hands of the enemy, and because the latter had been victorious in a series of hard fought conflicts; although they knew that the continental army was small in number, composed in a great measure of raw recruits,

half naked, without arms, without ammunition, without every thing which gives efficiency and confidence to a martial host; while, on the other hand, they also knew that the British forces were uniformly vastly superior in numbers, superior in discipline, abundantly supplied with arms, ammunition, and stores, and encouraged by a large and considerable portion of disaffected people.

When Washington went into winter quarters, after the occupation of Philadelphia by the British, the Legislature of Pennsylvania addressed a remonstrance to Congress on the subject, in which they gave utterance to sentiments of dissatisfaction with the commander-in-chief. Congress then appointed a new board of war, of which General Gates, whom many wished to make the rival of Washington, was made president, and Generals Mifflin and Conway, bitter enemies of Washington, were appointed members. General Gates, elated by his success in the capture of Burgoyne, was not unwilling to lend himself to the base uses of this faction. General Conway, whom Washington justly stigmatizes in one of his letters, as "a dangerous incendiary, in which character the country will sooner or later know him," was particularly active in his secret and public hostility to Washington. All the disasters and defeats of the war were ascribed to the incom-

petency of that general. The exploit of Gates was triumphantly pointed at as an evidence of what a commander of real ability and energy could effect. Conway asserted that "Heaven has been determined to save the country, or a weak general and bad counselors would have ruined it." To Gates an independent command was given by the Board of War, in the north, which interfered with the freedom and efficiency of Washington's movements. Calumnies, both secret and public, were widely diffused against him, in every possible way, by the disaffected. Mr. Laurens, the President of Congress, received anonymous letters full of the basest and vilest charges against him. These letters Mr. Laurens sent to Washington to apprise him of what was going on. In answer to the communication of that patriot which accompanied the infamous missives, Washington, whose great and serene soul remained undisturbed amid the dangers, difficulties, and miseries of his position, answered as follows:

"I was not unapprized that a malignant faction had been for some time forming to my prejudice, which, conscious as I am of having done all in my power to answer the important purposes of the trusts reposed in me, could not but give me some pain on a personal account; but my chief concern arises from an apprehension of the dangerous consequences

which intestine dissensions may produce to the common cause.

“The anonymous paper handed you exhibits many serious charges, and it is my wish that it may be submitted to Congress.

“My enemies take an ungenerous advantage of me. They know the delicacy of my situation, and that motives of policy deprive me of the defense I might otherwise make against their insidious attacks. They know I cannot combat their insinuations, however injurious, without disclosing secrets it is of the utmost moment to conceal.”

General Mifflin, the quarter-master general of the army, was another of the chief causes of the difficulties which existed. After this cabal had carried on their schemes for some time, public sentiment crushed their influence so completely that their malignant efforts produced no results. General Mifflin at last felt constrained by the force of public opinion to resign his post.

How Washington felt and acted under the operation of these machinations, we feel naturally curious to inquire; and his conduct and temper on this occasion must go far in deciding our estimate of his extraordinary character. Endowed with a mind not only of colossal strength, but of singular firmness, these aspersions caused neither agitation nor excite-

ment; though not to feel in some degree indignant, would have been to possess attributes superior to those of humanity. In his answer to General Gates, calling for the name of the informer, there is but one expression which implied any degree of undue excitement, where he says: "Pardon me then, for adding, that, so far from conceiving the safety of the States can be affected, or in the smallest degree injured, by a discovery of this kind, or that I should be called upon in such solemn terms to point out the author, that I considered the information as coming from yourself, and given with a friendly view to forewarn, and consequently forearm me against a secret enemy, or in other words, a *dangerous incendiary*, in which character, sooner or later, this country will know General Conway."

At this time the army was barefooted, naked, and without provisions, the fault of which was exclusively in Congress and in the depreciated currency of the country; and imagination, in its wildest creations, cannot conceive sufferings more intense than were this winter endured by the American army.

How acutely Washington felt, and sympathized with these sufferings, might be shown by multiplied evidences of his humane feelings; but we shall confine ourselves to part of one of his letters to Governor Livingston: "I sincerely feel for the unhappy con-



dition of our poor fellows in the hospitals, and wish my powers to relieve them were equal to my inclination. It is but too melancholy a truth, that our hospital stores of every kind are lamentably scanty and deficient. I fear there is no prospect of their being soon in a better condition. Our difficulties and distresses are certainly great, and such as wound the feelings of humanity:—our sick, naked!—our well, naked!—our unfortunate men in captivity, naked!”

The army was now melting away, owing to the depreciation of continental money, which reduced the officers to beggary, and the soldiers to nakedness. Washington recommended increased pay, half pay, and a pension system, and submitted to Congress an elaborate, able, and comprehensive system for the organization of the army, as well as for the commissary department in particular; to which Congress conformed in their new regulations.

Still the famine in the army prevailed, and every hour threatened to dissolve it notwithstanding the herculean labors of Washington to exhort the States to action, and to stimulate the Congress to energy. Mutiny was often manifested by the starving troops, and as often suppressed; but nothing could have crushed it but the deep affection which most of the men cherished for their great com-



mander, who possessed that indescribable quality which attached both officers and soldiers to his person, and inspired them all with veneration and respect. To this quality alone in the general, is to be ascribed the preservation of the army at this perilous crisis.

Perhaps no man ever received so signal and complete atonement from the party guilty of an injury, as did General Washington, when the following letter from General Conway, who had been seriously wounded in a duel, was addressed to him:

*“Philadelphia, July 23, 1778.*

“SIR,—I find myself just able to hold the pen during a few minutes, and take this opportunity of expressing my sincere grief for having done, written, or said any thing disagreeable to your excellency. My career will soon be over; therefore justice and truth prompt me to declare my last sentiments. You are, in my eyes, the great and good man. May you long enjoy the love, veneration and esteem of these States, whose liberties you have asserted by your virtues.

“I am, with the greatest respect, Sir, &c.”

During this trying season, the darkest in the personal history of Washington, Hamilton remained his faithful friend, and one of his most trusted con-

fidants. He boldly defended his conduct from every charge. He was chosen by Washington to visit General Gates in his camp at Albany, in order to induce him to detach a considerable portion of his army, and send it to the assistance of the main force encamped near Philadelphia. On his arrival in Albany Hamilton had an interview with General Gates in reference to the object of his mission. After some deliberation he assented; and eventually resolved to send the weakest of the three brigades under his command, which did not muster more than six hundred men fit for duty. As soon as Hamilton ascertained this fact, he strongly represented to General Gates the impropriety of this selection; and urged that one of the other brigades, commanded by Generals Nixon or Glover, should be dispatched for that service. The energetic remonstrance of Hamilton accomplished his purpose; and General Glover's brigade was ordered to join the main army near Philadelphia.

So efficient were the services rendered by Hamilton at this period, that they elicited from the commander-in-chief the following letter, dated amid the gloomy and wintry scenes of Valley Forge, November 15th, 1777. "I have duly received your several favors from the time you left me, to that of the 12th instant. I approve entirely of all the steps you have

taken, and have only to wish that the exertions of those you have had to deal with had kept pace with your zeal and good intentions. I hope your health will, before this, have permitted you to push on the rear of the whole reinforcement beyond New Windsor. Some of the enemy's ships have arrived in the Delaware, but how many have troops on board I cannot exactly ascertain. The enemy has lately damaged Fort Mifflin considerably, but our people keep possession, and seem determined to do so to the last extremity. Our loss in men has been but small—Captain Treat is unfortunately among the killed. I wish you a safe return.” Such were the terms of familiar confidence which the most reserved and distant of men employed in his private correspondence with a youth of twenty-one, who had been selected among many brave and older men to perform a service of great difficulty, importance, and danger.

During the campaign of 1778 Hamilton continued in the suite of Washington, and actually was engaged in the service. His conduct at the battle of Monmouth was brilliant in the extreme, and was of signal benefit in counteracting the singular proceedings of General Lee.

On the 18th of June, the British army marched to Haddonfield, New Jersey. Sir Henry Clinton, with the force under his command, approached Amboy

by way of Monmouth. Washington summoned a council of war to decide whether an attack on Clinton would then be desirable. The council advised that no attack should be ventured. General Washington was strongly convinced of the propriety of an opposite course. In this judgment General Greene and Col. Hamilton, at that time the two officers who possessed the largest share of the confidence of their commander, agreed with him that the opportunity was favorable to attack the retreating foe. Washington gave orders for the pursuit. On the 28th of June the American army came up to the British, whom they found intrenched on the heights of Monmouth. General Lee, at break of day, was ordered to commence the attack. Washington was coming up with the main army. At the suggestion of Hamilton, General Greene was ordered to file off with the right wing, to protect the right of the army. Wayne was ordered by Lee to leave his own detachment and take the command of the front. The former immediately sent word back to General Lee, that the enemy were retreating in great disorder, and urged him to push forward the rest of his troops in pursuit. The foremost regiment of the Americans, commanded by Col. Butler, were then attacked by a body of British horse, but were so gallantly received that they were broken, thrown into confu-

sion and routed. Wayne still pressed on to the charge with his characteristic heroism. The enemy, overborne by his impetuosity, were in full retreat, when the order came forward from General Lee *to retreat*. Hamilton was the first to rejoin Washington, and to inform him of this singular and disastrous movement. Washington's outbursts of passion were very few; but when they did come, they were terrific. That which occurred on this occasion seemed to have exceeded in fury all others of which history makes mention; and the cause of his irritation appears to have justified its intensity. As soon as he was informed of the retreat of the advanced corps, he gave vent to his indignation, jumped from his horse, pushed forward toward the fugitives, and rallied them. Meanwhile he advanced to the spot where General Lee stood, and addressed him in words of just indignation, which their author and the occasion have rendered memorable. He then ordered Wayne to renew the combat, and a cannonade to be opened upon the enemy. He directed Colonels Ramsey and Stewart to reform the division under General Lee, and press on to the charge.

The retreat ordered by Lee had inspired the British, who had halted to resume the conflict. They advanced on the artillery which had been posted on the right. Hamilton formed Varnum's

brigade and charged the enemy at their head. In this gallant service his horse was shot under him. The engagement on the right was sharp, and General Greene commanded there with signal ability. Washington followed up the attack on the centre, and the artillery placed there, under General Knox, did great execution upon the enemy's front. The battle was still undecided when night fell; but the British took advantage of the darkness, retreated, and embarked at Sandy Hook. The Americans remained masters of the battle field, and encamped that night upon the ensanguined plain.

The services of Hamilton on this occasion were highly appreciated by Washington. He inserted a high eulogium upon him, in his dispatch to Congress, which at Hamilton's own request was afterward expunged. A cotemporary writer speaking of Hamilton at Monmouth, says: "I am happy to have it in my power to mention the merit of Col. Hamilton. He was incessant in his endeavors during the day in reconnoitering the enemy, in rallying, and in charging; but whether he or Col. Laurens deserves most of our commendation is somewhat doubtful. Both had their horses shot under them, and both exhibited singular proofs of bravery."

The court-martial which afterward examined the



conduct of General Lee, found him "guilty of disobedience of orders in not attacking the enemy, or misbehavior, by making an unnecessary and disorderly retreat, and of disrespect to the commander-in-chief." He was suspended from his command for twelve months, and afterward, on January 10th, 1780, was entirely dismissed from the service. About this period, Hamilton again distinguished himself in a literary way, by the publication of some letters exposing the malfeasance of a member of Congress in speculating in flour, by which the difficulties and privations of the army were much augmented. These letters were signed "Publius,"—a name which he afterward immortalized in the *Federalist*. Mr. Troup very truly asserts that the style and vigor of these letters more nearly resembled those of Junius than any other production in the language.

The abilities and services of Hamilton had by this time, in spite of his youth, rendered him one of the most distinguished persons in the army. Nor did his great fame surround and afflict him with the jealousy of his associates. He was then as popular as he was eminent. This unusual circumstance arose from the superior affability and generosity of his temper. He was a great favorite with the soldiers. He was also very popular with the of-

ficers, and especially with the large number of foreign officers who were in the service, in consequence of his familiarity with the French language which they spoke. He numbered among his intimate friends Baron Steuben, Lafayette, Fleury, La Luzerne, and Du Portail. And above all, he enjoyed the full confidence of that great man, who was slow to confide, and slower still to love; but who already cherished this favorite youth with an affection as rare as it was honorable.

## CHAPTER IV.

EVENTS OF 1780—FINANCIAL DIFFICULTIES OF THE COLONIES—HAMILTON'S FINANCIAL SCHEMES—ROBERT MORRIS—BANK OF UNITED STATES PROPOSED—HAMILTON'S LETTER TO ROBERT MORRIS—FRENCH AID SENT TO THE COLONIES—CAUSES OF THE FRIENDLY INTERPOSITION OF FRANCE—TREASON OF ARNOLD—HAMILTON'S PROJECTS FOR THE NATIONAL PROSPERITY—HIS LETTER TO JAMES DUANE—HAMILTON APPOINTED MINISTER TO FRANCE—HE DECLINES.

THE revolutionary struggle continued; but by the year 1780 the conflict had resolved itself chiefly into a rivalry in financial ability and resource between the mother country and the colonies. It then seemed that whichever party could continue the war the longest, possessed the best guarantees of permanent and final success.

Under such circumstances the active and patriotic mind of Hamilton soon reverted to the elaboration of such financial schemes, as he supposed would relieve the distress of the country, and furnish new munitions of war to the patriots. He addressed a letter to Robert Morris, a distinguished member of Congress from Pennsylvania, disclosing a plan for increasing the pecuniary resources of the colonies. The letter was anonymous; and the writer assigned

as a reason why he chose that method of communication rather than through the public press, that the discussion of the subject involved allusions to the weakness and poverty of the country, the exposure of which would be exceedingly prejudicial to the cause of liberty. The writer then proceeds to discuss the plan proposed, the nature of the existing currency, the amount of taxes, of domestic and foreign trade, of the depreciation of the currency, and of its consequence, a want of confidence in the community. He states that the expedient of a foreign loan was a good one; but that this was liable to great objections, and that he had another remedy to propose which was still more efficient, and free from all objection. This plan was the establishment of an American Bank, to be chartered by Congress for the period of ten years, and to be termed the Bank of the United States. The basis of this institution was to be a foreign loan of two millions of pounds, to be used in the bank as a portion of its stock; a subscription to be opened for stock to the amount of two hundred millions of dollars more, the payments to be guaranteed by the government on the dissolution of the bank by ten millions of specie, or by a *bona fide* equivalent currency. The bank notes were to be made payable to the bearer in three months, at ten per cent. An annual loan of ten millions of pounds

was to be furnished to Congress by the bank at four per cent. The letter contained other items, more fully explaining the ideas of the writer. He sketched the details which would be necessary to give efficiency to the operation of the institution. He proposed the appointment of a Minister of Finance. He suggested that Congress should establish the bank, set it in operation, and superintend its progress. He closed by asserting that Mr. Robert Morris was in his judgment the most suitable person in the nation to be placed at the head of such an institution.

This production, when its authorship became known, won for Hamilton the not undeserved title of the "Founder of the Public Credit of the United States." It exhibited the superior powers of his capacious and many-sided intellect in a new department. Able as a political writer on great national issues, able as a soldier, bold, prudent, eloquent as he had already proved himself to be, in every position in which he had been placed, he now established a high reputation as a financier. His clear and sagacious views attracted and deserved the more attention, because at that time the science of finance was but little known in the colonies. His intellectual vigor enabled him to rise triumphantly above the prevalent prejudices and contracted ideas of

that day, and to lay open to view new and unappropriated fields for the advancement of the national credit and wealth; and with the attainment of this result, to furnish the necessary material aid to carry on the great struggle for liberty which then engaged and exhausted the nation.

This letter of Mr. Hamilton was not without its results. Shortly after its receipt, the plan of a bank in Pennsylvania was introduced founded upon private contribution only, possessing a capital of three hundred thousand pounds. Its purpose was to furnish the army with a supply of provisions and ammunition. The hint also given by Hamilton in this letter in reference to the establishment of executive departments in the Federal government were so valuable that they approved themselves highly to the judgment of Robert Morris,—justly termed the great financier of the Revolution,—were pressed by him upon the consideration of Congress, and were finally adopted by that body with little variation from the details suggested by Mr. Hamilton.

In July, 1780, an expedition arrived from France to the assistance of the colonies. This auspicious event infused new courage into the desponding but patriotic hearts of thousands. The causes which led France at that period to interest herself so effectually in the dispute between Great Britain and the



colonies may be found in the remote recesses of events which have generally escaped the scrutiny of historians. It was not because France could at that time well afford the proffered assistance. It was not because Louis XVI. then sat securely on his throne, and feared no domestic and internal commotions. It was not because the French monarch and his ministers loved liberty, or those who were its partisans and representatives. The cause of this opportune succor thus vouchsafed by Bourbon tyrants to American patriots and jacobins, was to be found in an old grudge which France entertained against England, in consequence of the interference of the latter in her own colonial strifes and difficulties. Genoa had ceded the Island of Corsica to France; but the inhabitants were restive under the transfer, and preferred their old masters, the Genoese. In 1768, a rebellion against the supremacy of France had broken forth, led on by Paoli, a distinguished and influential citizen. At this crisis the British ministry dispatched an emissary to Corsica, to offer assistance to the insurgents. That assistance was accepted; and many thousand stand of arms were secretly sent from the Tower of London to the rebels. France discovered this interference, notwithstanding the secrecy which was thrown around it, and it was not forgotten. She

awaited the day of vengeance. Paoli, in spite of the succor which was sent him, was defeated, and compelled to flee from Corsica to Leghorn, and thence to England.\* At length that day of vengeance had arrived; and a French armament was sent to the aid of the rebel colonies in America. How singular was it that the same monarch who, in subsequent years, was destined to become the victim of the Jacobins, should himself have aided so effectually the cause of liberty! And how remarkable was it that Louis XVI., by thus dispatching assistance to the American revolutionists, and securing their eventual triumph, should by that very act have consummated an event which became the most potent cause of the outburst of that same revolution which afterward overturned his own dynasty, which hurled him from the throne, which consigned him and his queen to the guillotine, and which entailed innumerable miseries on his kingly race!

The first object proposed by the combined French and American forces was a descent on New York, to rescue it from the grasp of the British. This project was afterward abandoned, and the French fleet proceeded to Newport. A personal interview was planned between the American commander

\* See the Conference of Dunant with General Paoli, July 24th, 1768, detailed in Grafton's Autobiography, p. 210.

and Admiral Rochambeau. This meeting took place at Hartford, on the 20th of September. Washington was accompanied on this occasion by Lafayette, McHenry, and Hamilton. The interview was satisfactory in its results. It enabled the commanders of the respective forces to arrange their plans more definitely for the future. But the selection of Hamilton on this very important occasion, to accompany Washington, is an incident which reflects high honor on the youthful patriot.

This was the period of the memorable treason of Arnold. When returning from Hartford, Washington was first apprized of the flight of that traitor and the arrest of Andre. In reference to the fall of the British officer who was thus involved in the punishment which Arnold deserved, Hamilton, moved by a generous sympathy for the fate of one so young, so chivalrous, and so promising, exerted his utmost efforts to discover some legal and honorable expedient to save him. When all proved unavailing, he felt deeply for the unfortunate officer, and published a narrative of the facts in the case, in a letter to his friend Laurens, which reflects equal credit, both upon his intellect and his heart. It was a model of elegance, clearness, simplicity and force in the art of narration.

In a letter to Miss Elizabeth Schuyler, the

daughter of the distinguished general of that name, Hamilton describes the execution of Andre with graphic power; and thus speaks of that melancholy occurrence: "Poor Andre suffers to day; every thing that is amiable in virtue, in fortitude, in delicate sentiment, and accomplished manners, pleads for him; but hard-hearted policy calls for a sacrifice. He must die. I send you my account of Arnold's affair, and to justify myself to your sentiment, I must inform you that I urged a compliance with Andre's request to be shot, and I do not think it would have had an ill effect; but some people are only sensible to motives of policy, and sometimes, from a narrow disposition, mistake it."

Genius and virtue threw all the fascinating hues of romance around the execution of this ill-fated son of destiny. Brave, generous, and lofty, endowed with the most exalted sense of honor, and a gallantry approaching the spirit of the old cavaliers of romance, possessing talents of the highest order, and an intellect cultivated to the most brilliant point of perfection; joined to all those refined sensibilities which constitute the poetry of life, and rescue men from the groveling vices and debasing passions of our kind, Andre became an object of interest and concern to all, but in a particular manner to Washington; who, being so richly

gifted with the same attributes, became fully qualified to appreciate his virtues, and to sympathize acutely in his misfortune. But however deeply he might feel, his natural firmness and heroic sense of duty to his country, and to liberty, constrained him by every obligation of patriotic duty to enforce the verdict of the court martial; and if a tear fell to moisten the paper, when he appended his signature to the warrant for the execution, it was the hallowed tribute which nature, in a virtuous bosom, ever pays to the afflictions of a noble mind, and redeemed the act of *state policy* from every trace of revenge, cruelty, or design.

The unceasing efforts of the British government to rescue Andre from his impending fate, did honor to the country in whose service his life was so fruitlessly sacrificed, and they wipe away some of the dark stains occasioned by the honors and rewards they bestowed on the traitor-knave who had enticed him into so disgraceful an end, and who, while virtue continues to be cherished, or patriotism rewarded with the applause of men, will be doomed to everlasting execration, as one who combined splendor of talents with the perfection of crime, and whose *name* will be appropriated by the remotest generations of mankind, to cover with the leprosy of infamy all those vile deeds, whose atro-

city may fail to be expressed in the common words of our language, but which will find an ample substitute in the name of *Benedict Arnold*.

Allied to some of the first families of Great Britain, and placed by royal patronage in the highest path of preferment, the fate of Major Andre produced an impression which extended even to the heart of the throne. Contracted in vows of love to one of the most beautiful and accomplished daughters of England, the fate of Andre became a touching theme for the poet, as well as an instructive moral to the historian; and while the bosom of beauty sighed over his fate, the lyre of the minstrel tuned a plaintive melody to his melancholy and ill-fated love.

By Washington only could the execution of a sentence which awakened such profound and universal sympathy, have been fulfilled without producing imputations of cruelty, and a vindictive thirst for blood. But the mild benevolence of his heart, the lofty justice of his mind, and the exalted purity of his intentions, interposed the bulwark of humanity against the remotest suspicion of want of clemency. Washington never shed human blood but with anguish, and on occasions of the most dire necessity. He took no delight in scenes of carnage, and never exposed the lives of his sol-



diers more than was absolutely necessary to the purpose in hand; being more frugal of the expenditure of life than any general who ever led a squadron to the field, in any age or country.

The entire safety of the American cause pleaded with irresistible eloquence in favor of the execution of Andre; and the flight and escape of Arnold added weight to every consideration of policy that operated to induce the doom of the former. The attempt of the British alone to enter the American camp with overflowing purses of gold, tempting the weak and corrupting the wicked, demanded exemplary punishment on the part of the commander-in-chief; and however sophistry might quibble about the justice of the sentence of the court martial, on the ground that Andre did not *enter* the American lines in disguise, the fact never was disputed that he was arrested in disguise *within* the American lines.

The whole deportment of Major Andre, however, was so frank, manly, and honorable, as to enlist among his warmest champions and admirers the most zealous friends of American independence, who only regretted that fortune should have favored the flight of the infamous traitor Arnold, while adversity cast her toils around his brilliant but less fortunate victim: for Andre confessed, with the

frankness of a soldier, and the veracity of a man of honor, the object of his visit to West Point; and instead of obscuring the case by equivocations and concealment, threw himself at once on the magnanimity of his foes, by avowing his real designs. It will, however, notwithstanding the fact of his disguise, ever remain a disputed point, whether he could strictly be viewed in the light of a spy; but the necessity of his execution was placed beyond a doubt, and his claim to be set at liberty, under all the circumstances, never could be fully established. Yet his death did not sully his fame, or cover him with opprobrium—having died like a hero as he had lived like a man of bravery and honor. The most rigid patriot may shed a tear over his fate, may feel esteem for his virtues, and may express admiration for his heroism, valor, and genius.

It is worthy of note that, at this early period, while the colonies were involved in a struggle, the issue of which to most observers yet seemed doubtful; while the minds of the most sagacious of American patriots were content to dwell on the present energies and wants of the country, the superior intellect of Hamilton already traveled forward to the future, discerned the ultimate issue of the conflict, and contemplated and discussed

those great national measures which would then become essential to the establishment of the national unity, harmony, and prosperity. In a letter written to James Duane, a distinguished patriot, in 1780, he discusses with a masterly hand, the nature and history of republican governments; the proper sources of legitimate power among them; the dangers which surround them; the just proportion and distribution of power; and the advantages of a confederacy of States. He depicts the evils which have afflicted ancient and modern republics, and portrays their causes. He draws lessons of profound political wisdom from their experience and their misfortunes. He speaks wisely of the taxes, imports, commerce and revenue of free and representative States. He describes the proper distribution of the executive departments, the officers of the Federal government, and the just establishment and support of an army; and proposes wise and judicious remedies for all the evils which had occurred, and which might occur, in the administration of a free, federative, republican government; how to proportion the taxes, how to collect them; how to increase the revenue of the country without encroachments on personal liberty; and how a National Bank might be established and conducted, which would prove a safe,

permanent source of individual and national wealth and prosperity. This production of this gifted statesman, written at that early period, and with the few lights then existing on the subject, by which he indicates the very principles which were afterward in great part incorporated into the Federal Constitution itself, is an unequalled monument of his intellect; and proves, that the orphan boy of Nevis was in truth one of nature's master-pieces, born to assume a high and distinguished place in the history of his times.

The dissensions which now arose in Congress, generated by the quarrels and jealousies of our ministers at foreign courts, produced no little elation in the minds of our enemies. The real character of the state of the country, at this period, will be best delineated by a letter written by Washington himself, to one of his ablest political friends, in which he says: "I am particularly desirous of a free communication of sentiments with you at this time, because I view things very differently, I fear, from what people in general do, who seem to think the contest at an end, and that to make money, and get places, are the only things now remaining to be done. I have seen, without despondency, even for a moment, the hours which America has styled her gloomy ones; but I have beheld no day since the

commencement of hostilities, when I have thought her liberties in such imminent danger as at present. Friends and foes seem now to combine to pull down the goodly fabric we have hitherto been raising, at the expense of so much time, blood, and treasure; and unless the bodies politic will exert themselves to bring things back to *first principles*, correct abuses, and punish our internal foes, inevitable ruin must follow. Indeed, we seem to be verging so fast to destruction, that I am filled with sensations to which I have been a stranger until within these three months. Our enemies behold with exultation and joy how effectually we labor for their benefit—and from being in a state of absolute despair, and on the point of evacuating America, are now on tiptoe. Nothing, therefore, in my judgment, can save us but a *total reformation* in our own conduct, or some decisive turn of affairs in Europe. The former, alas! (to our shame be it spoken,) is less likely to happen than the latter, as it is now consistent with the views of the speculators, various tribes of money makers, and stock-jobbers of all denominations, to continue the war for their own private emolument, without considering that this avarice and thirst for gain must plunge every thing, including themselves, in one common ruin.

“It is a fact too notorious to be concealed, that

Congress is rent by party—that much business of a trifling nature, and personal concernment, withdraws their attention from matters of great national moment at this critical period: when it is also known that idleness and dissipation take place of close attention and application. Believe me when I tell you there is danger of it. I have pretty good reasons for thinking that administration, a little while ago, had resolved to give the matter up, and negotiate a peace with us upon almost any terms; but I shall be much mistaken if they do not now, from the present state of our currency, dissensions, and other circumstances, push matters to the utmost extremity. Nothing, I am sure, will prevent it but the interruption of Spain, and their disappointed hope from Russia.”

Thus, with a comprehensive eye and an ever wakeful patriotism, did Washington penetrate to the causes of weakness, lament the obstacles to our independence, and labor to soothe irritation, remove difficulties, and promote union, harmony, and success. But whatever hopes the English might then cherish from existing dissensions were speedily dissipated by that recuperative energy and common sense of danger, which recalled the minds of men from the spoils of victory to the acquisition of permanent and rational liberty.



Active hostilities were now transferred from the northern and middle States to South Carolina and Georgia, where a large body of tories, disaffected to the cause of freedom, inspired the enemy with sanguine hopes of making an easy conquest of those States; in which attempt they at first but too well succeeded.

Serious discontents of a seditious character, having appeared in the Jersey brigade, Washington, with his usual address and patriotism, labored to arrest it by the persuasion of his eloquence. The want of pay, and other evils incident to a deranged and rotten currency, were of too deep a nature to be very patiently borne or easily healed.

Washington now directed his attention to the Indian settlements; and having dispatched Colonel Van Schaik and General Sullivan against some of the towns of the Onandagoes, a complete devastation of their country and farms was effected.

In November, 1780, the American Congress had concluded to send an Envoy Extraordinary to France, for the purpose of procuring from that country more extensive and efficient aid. Colonel Hamilton was selected by Washington, by Lafayette, and other leading statesmen, to fill this important post. At first it seemed probable that the proffered service would be accepted. But at that

moment information arrived that Henry Laurens, formerly President of Congress, who had been appointed a commissioner to negotiate a treaty with the United Provinces, had been arrested in England and imprisoned. This induced a desire on the part of Hamilton's friend, Col. Laurens, the son of the captive commissioner, to go abroad in order to obtain his father's release. As soon as Hamilton learned the willingness of his friend to undertake the mission, he generously relinquished all pretensions of his own, and insisted on the appointment of Mr. Laurens. On the 11th of December, 1780, that gentleman was accordingly elected by Congress as Envoy of the colonies to France. Previous to the departure of Mr. Laurens, General Washington desired that he should be furnished with a minute letter of instructions, which, as Lafayette suggested, would add considerable weight and efficiency to his representations. The honorable and difficult task of preparing this letter was committed by Washington to the execution of Mr. Hamilton; and it was composed with his usual prudence, ability, and success.

## CHAPTER V.

MARRIAGE OF HAMILTON—QUARREL BETWEEN HAMILTON AND WASHINGTON—HAMILTON RETIRES FROM THE CAMP—HIS PLAN OF A NATIONAL BANK—WRITES THE CONTINENTALIST—HE RETURNS TO THE CAMP—INCIDENTS AT YORKTOWN—HEROISM OF HAMILTON AT THE CAPTURE OF CORNWALLIS—GLORIOUS RESULTS OF THAT VICTORY—HAMILTON RETURNS TO ALBANY—COMMENCES THE STUDY OF THE LAW—IS APPOINTED RECEIVER OF CONTINENTAL TAXES—HIS ADMISSION TO THE BAR.

THESE interesting occurrences in the life of Hamilton were concluded toward the end of the year, by his marriage with Miss Elizabeth Schuyler, the second daughter of General Philip Schuyler, the eminent revolutionary soldier and patriot. This event took place at Albany, the residence of the bride's father, on the 14th of December, 1780.

Among the many gallant and distinguished young men who were known to the family circle of General Schuyler, not a few might have reasonably aspired to the honor of the lady's hand. But among that brilliant company the young West Indian, then in his twenty-fourth year, and already classed with the most eminent soldiers and patriots of the land, triumphantly bore away the prize. He was indeed not undeserving of this preference.

He was young, handsome in person, of spotless character, of splendid abilities, possessing a high fame, and enjoying the most flattering prospects of the future. The bride was beautiful, accomplished, talented, and well-born. Her vivacity, intelligence, and amiability, had rendered her an universal favorite in the polished circles of Albany, at that time one of the most select and cultivated towns in the country. Rarely had a more distinguished and appropriate match been accomplished; and the many friends of the young couple rejoiced at their felicity. This union, as might readily be supposed, was congenial in the highest degree; and was productive of the utmost happiness. They enjoyed twenty-four years of domestic comfort, which seemed but to increase, as the progress of time accumulated new honors on the head of the gifted statesman; until at last, the bloody hand of one who has not inappropriately been termed his assassin, ended a career of unsurpassed usefulness and honor, by a violent death and a premature grave.

A few weeks after the marriage of Hamilton, on the 16th of February, 1781, a somewhat singular and disagreeable incident occurred between himself and the commander-in-chief, which exerted some influence on his future career.

He had now been nearly four years in the family

of Washington, as his aid-de-camp. He had secured, by his superior abilities and integrity, the first place in his confidence. But the position had always been one in some respects disagreeable to Hamilton, inasmuch as it placed him in a state of dependence on the will and subject to the caprices of another. On the day just mentioned a breach occurred between them which put an end to this relation, though between men of such intelligence and such integrity it could not diminish their mutual confidence and respect.

The incidents of the dispute were these; and trivial enough they were to have led to such important consequences. Washington and Hamilton passed each other on the stairs at the head-quarters of the army, then located at Morristown, in New Jersey. The general said he wished to speak to Hamilton. The latter answered that he would wait on him immediately. Hamilton went below and delivered a letter of importance to Mr. Tilghman, which was to be sent immediately to the Commissary, as it contained an order of the most pressing nature. As Hamilton reascended the stairs he was met by General Lafayette. The latter detained him a few moments in conversation. When Hamilton reached the head of the stairs he met General Washington, who had left his own apartment and come forward



to accost him. He exclaimed in an angry tone: "Col. Hamilton, you have kept me waiting for you these ten minutes. I must tell you, sir, you treat me with disrespect." Hamilton replied: "I am not conscious of it, sir; but since you have thought it necessary to tell me so, we part." "Very well, sir," responded Washington, "if it be your choice."

Such was the cause of this unfortunate difficulty. The truth was that Washington, harassed by ten thousand cares, had in a moment of thoughtlessness given way to a little petulance which was quite excusable; and that Hamilton, wearied with the disagreeable dependence which always attends the position and functions of an aid-de-camp, determined to embrace the opportunity thus afforded to put an end to a relation which he had long endured only from patriotic and disinterested motives, and from a powerful attachment to the person and career of Washington.

True to the greatness of his character, scarcely an hour had elapsed before Washington sent Mr. Tilghman to Hamilton to express to him his great confidence in his abilities, integrity, and usefulness, and desired to heal the difference which had been caused by a moment of unguarded irritation. But Hamilton persisted in his resolution to embrace that opportunity to withdraw from the general's



family, and to enter on a more free and unconstrained career; and therefore, while giving utterance to the boundless admiration and honor with which he regarded the commander-in-chief, declined to change his resolution to withdraw from his family. Yet this separation, unpleasant as it was to both parties, did not in the least impair their friendship; and in subsequent years Hamilton still stood first in the confidence of Washington, for ability, integrity, and patriotism.

Hamilton applied to the commander-in-chief, shortly after this separation, for an independent command. But there were insuperable difficulties in the way, arising from the jealousy of older officers in seeing a younger one promoted over them; and the request was refused. Lafayette, who was stationed at this period at Richmond, in command of the southern portion of the army, invited Hamilton to take command of the artillery companies in that service, and urgently pressed upon him to comply with the offer.

But Hamilton's mind was at this period, in April, 1781, engaged in elaborating several financial schemes intended to relieve the pecuniary wants of the country; and the fruit of his investigation he embodied in another letter to Robert Morris, discussing the causes of the depreciation of the Con

tinental currency, indicating the most efficient means for increasing its value, and detailing a charter for a bank, to be adopted and incorporated by Congress. In this communication he boldly asserts the principle that, "*it is in a National Bank alone, that we can find the ingredients to constitute a wholesome, solid, and beneficial paper credit.*" The opinion entertained of this elaborate and lengthy production by the distinguished financier to whom it was addressed, may be inferred from the following words contained in the letter sent by Mr. Morris in reply to Hamilton: "My office is new, (Superintendent of Finance,) and I am young in the execution of it. Communications from men of genius and abilities will always be acceptable, and yours will ever command the attention of your obedient humble servant." The plans suggested by Mr. Hamilton were submitted by Mr. Morris to Congress, and adopted on the 26th of May, 1781.

The next project of Mr. Hamilton had reference to the future establishment of a convention of States. In order to promote the consummation of this result, he devoted himself to the composition of a series of masterly essays, under the title of the *Continentalist*, the first number of which appeared in July, 1781. They present a worthy foreshadowing of the unrivaled power and splendor which were

destined afterward to shine forth from every page of "Publius" in the *Federalist*. In these essays he discussed the defects of the existing confederacy between the colonies; asserts the propriety and advantage of concentrating efficient power in the central government; and exposes the absurdity of that jealousy of the federal authority which some of the colonies had displayed. He clearly described the powers with which an efficient federal government ought to be invested. He showed how it ought to regulate trade, how it should grant bounties and premiums, how it should impose duties, appoint officers of the customs, lay embargos, levy taxes, dispose of unseated lands, appropriate the products of the mines, and appoint all officers in the land and naval service.

He established, with great clearness and force of reasoning, the position that, in all federative governments, the great danger is, lest in consequence of the jealousies of its members, its powers will be too much restricted; that it will not possess sufficient resources to protect itself, and thereby preserve the blessings which such a union is intended to confer; and that it is never possible, in the nature of things, for the central power to become formidable to the general liberty. "A mere regard to the interests of the confederacy, will never be a princi-

ple sufficiently active to curb the ambition and intrigues of different members. Force cannot affect it. A contest of arms will seldom take place between the common sovereign and a single refractory member, but between distinct combinations of the several parts against each other, a sympathy of situations will be apt to produce associates to the disobedient." At the early age of twenty-four, the prophetic eye of this in-born statesman foresaw, even while the country was panting and fainting under the ponderous load of a protracted war with the greatest of European powers, and the issue seemed doubtful even to the most patriotic and sanguine,—he then foresaw the future splendors of the land of his adoption. Says he: "There is something noble and magnificent in the perspective of a great *Federative Republic*, closely linked in the pursuit of a common interest, tranquil and prosperous at home, respectable abroad; there is something proportionably diminutive and contemptible in the prospect of a number of petty States, with the appearance only of union,—jarring, jealous and perverse,—without any determined direction, fluctuating and unhappy at home, weak and insignificant by their dissensions in the eyes of other nations. Happy America, if those to whom thou hast intrusted the guardianship of thy infancy, know how to provide for thy

future repose; but miserable and undone if their negligence or ignorance permits the spirit of discord to erect her banners on the ruins of thy tranquillity."

In the spring of 1781, hostilities with England were again resumed, and the revolutionary struggle proceeded. Washington resolved to attack New York, and preparatory to that decisive movement he judged it advisable to hold an interview with the French commander, General Rochambeau. For this purpose he again visited Newport. The degree of confidence and esteem which Washington still entertained for Hamilton, notwithstanding their temporary coolness, may be inferred from the following letter, which was written at this time: "Dear Hamilton—I shall be obliged to you for the answer to the address, as soon as it is convenient to you. If we do not ride to the Point to see the fleet pass out, I am to have a conference with the Count de Rochambeau, and the engineer, directly after breakfast, at which I wish you to be present. I am sincerely and affectionately yours."

From Newport, Hamilton returned to Albany, and remained there a short time. In July, finding that his application for a separate command in the army would not be complied with, he wrote to Washington enclosing his commission. He proba-

bly did this at the suggestion, certainly with the approval, of his young wife. Washington declined to receive the resignation of Col. Hamilton, and promised to bestow the coveted command on the first available opportunity. This offer was accepted by Hamilton, and he withdrew his resignation. He returned to the camp at Dobb's Ferry, a position on the Hudson river, twenty miles above New York.

It was at this time Washington received the first information of the arrival of the French squadron under the Count de Grasse, off the coast of Virginia. A council of war was instantly summoned, at which Washington invited Mr. Hamilton to be present. After considerable discussion it was determined to relinquish the proposed attack on New York, and by a forced march to proceed toward Virginia. It was hoped that by an effective union with the approaching French armament, the capture or defeat of Cornwallis at Yorktown might be accomplished.

To render the consummation of this glorious enterprise more certain, it was kept studiously concealed, and a false destination of the army was announced. Sir Henry Clinton, the commander of the British forces in New York, was completely duped. But one difficulty impeded the execution of the bold



plan which had been adopted by General Washington. This was the want of the necessary means to remove the army to its distant destination. In this crisis, the great talents of Robert Morris as a financier were brought into requisition. He undertook to obtain the necessary means. In an incredibly short space of time he secured all the transport vessels on the Delaware, provided supplies of provisions along the whole intended route of the army, and even raised a portion of the necessary funds on his own private responsibility. If the capture of Cornwallis covered the American arms with imperishable glory; if it was the means of terminating that long, exhaustive struggle with an honorable peace; if that peace opened the way to the future power and prosperity of these confederate States; if, in a word, the triumph at Yorktown was the birth-cause of the present greatness and felicity of this republic; then no inconsiderable degree of the merit of all these fortunate results is due to the energy, ability, and patriotism of Robert Morris, at this critical and decisive moment of American history.

When the army was about to march for Virginia, Hamilton received his wished-for command, and prepared to accompany the expedition. His only regret upon this distant venture, was the pain which his absence would inflict on his young bride. His

own feelings on the subject may be inferred from the following extract from a letter to her which he wrote from the camp: "A part of the army, my dear girl, is going to Virginia, and I must of necessity be separated at a much greater distance from my beloved wife. I cannot announce the fatal necessity, without feeling every thing that a fond husband can feel. I am unhappy; I am unhappy beyond expression. I am unhappy because I am to be so remote from you; because I am to hear from you less frequently than I am accustomed to do. I am miserable because I know you will be so; I am wretched at the idea of flying so far from you without a single hour's interview, to tell you all my pains and all my love. But I cannot ask permission to visit you. It might be thought improper to leave my corps at such a time, and upon such an occasion. I must go without seeing you; I must go without embracing you;—alas! I must go. But let no idea other than of the distance we shall be asunder, disquiet you."

On the 22d August, 1781, the march commenced, and on the 6th September the army reached the head of the Elk. From this point Hamilton again wrote to his wife. He says: "I cannot refuse myself the pleasure of writing you a few lines. Constantly uppermost in my thoughts and affec-

tions, I am happy only when my movements are devoted to some office that respects you. I would give the world to be able to tell you all I feel, and all I wish; but consult your own heart, and you will know mine. What a world will soon be between us? To support the idea, all my fortitude will be insufficient. What must be the case with you, who have the most female of female hearts. I sink at the perspective of your distress, and I look to Heaven to be your guardian and support. Every day confirms me in the intention of renouncing public life, and devoting myself wholly to you. Let others waste their time and their tranquillity in a vain pursuit of power and glory; be it my object to be happy in a quiet retreat, with my better angel."

On the 22d of September the allied armies reached the harbor between Jamestown and Williamsburg. On the 28th they arrived before the enemy's works at Yorktown. The position of Cornwallis was one of considerable strength, and its defenses had been judiciously erected. It was situated on a peninsula formed by the junction of the York and James rivers, near their approach to the Chesapeake. To this position Cornwallis had been driven, by being intercepted in his retreat into the interior of Virginia on the one

side, and by the squadron of De Grasse, which excluded all deliverance from the British fleet at sea. On this point therefore he had concentrated all his forces, amounting to seven thousand men, and had determined to make a spirited resistance. On one hand, to the west, he was protected by an arm of the river, by a deep morass, and by a precipitous ravine. To the north, the high banks of the river were unfavorable to an attack; and he had mounted them with a formidable array of artillery. Several British ships of war were stationed in the river at this point, to co-operate in the defense. On the south and southwest, his camp was protected by an extensive and formidable line of field fortifications.

On the 6th of October the American army took their position and opened their first parallel. They were then six hundred yards from the enemy's works. Hamilton now moved his corps of light infantry within the works. Six heavy batteries, partly French and partly American, played continually on the British lines, and did immense execution. One of the men-of-war in the river, being set on fire by a red hot shot from a French battery, burned to the water's edge. On the 12th the second parallel was opened, and the allies were now within three hundred and fifty yards of the enemy's bat-

teries. The bombardment continued without intermission day and night. At this point of the siege, two batteries, detached from the rest of the works of the besieged, greatly annoyed the assailants; and it became necessary to take them by assault. The work on the extreme left was assigned to an American detachment; that on the right to a French. The former was commanded by Col. Hamilton, the latter by De Viomenil.

The signal for the commencement of this perilous service, was the discharge of a shell from the American battery, to be answered by a corresponding one from the French. The signal being given at the appointed time, Hamilton rushed forward at the head of his detachment to the attack. So great was his impetuosity that, before his men had ascended the abatis, he had mounted on the parapet; and there he stood with three only of his gallant soldiers, waving to his corps to advance. Under a heavy and destructive fire the heroic company pressed onward. Soon they reached the counterscarp, passed the ditch and palisades, and entered with their commander into the work. Here a sharp conflict ensued; but soon the ardor and bravery of the assailants overpowered the defenders of the redoubt, and it was taken. As soon as the enemy ceased to resist, quarter was allowed

them. No one was slain who yielded; although a more sanguinary policy might readily have been defended, in view of the ferocity which had frequently characterized the conduct of the British on former occasions. Only a few days before an American colonel had been wantonly slain, after he had been captured, when reconnoitering the position of the enemy, in violation of every dictate of honor and humanity. But Col. Hamilton forbade his men to retaliate on this occasion, though an opposite course could have been so well justified.

After the capture of both of the redoubts, the allies moved forward and drew their third parallel. The fate of the besieged now became desperate. They endeavored on the night of the 15th to release themselves by a vigorous sortie. This also proved unsuccessful. An attempt was then made by Cornwallis to cross the river in boats to Gloucester, and escape thence by land to New York. In this purpose he was defeated by the vigilance of the Americans, who erected new batteries on the river banks; and by the occurrence of a furious storm, which opportunely arose, tore the boats from their moorings and drove them down the river. The allies now prepared to make a general assault along the whole line of their works; but before they could execute this purpose, Washington received



proposals of surrender from Lord Cornwallis. Soon a suspension of hostilities was agreed upon; and after the terms of capitulation had been discussed and arranged, Cornwallis surrendered. Colonel Laurens, the friend of Hamilton, whose father was still a captive of the British king, in the Tower of London, was selected most appropriately to receive the sword of the vanquished tool of despotism. This glorious event may be said to have virtually ended the war; and thus in its closing and most memorable scene, Hamilton was permitted to enact a highly important and honorable part.

Every event on the part of the United States had, for some time, been conspiring to render a peace absolutely necessary to their preservation. The treasury was exhausted. No portion of the taxes could be realized; the army was discontented, because it was impoverished; and it was seditious, because smarting under wrongs which it had power, as well as inclination, to redress. Washington, ever watchful over the welfare of his country, had exhausted the resources of his genius, the influence of his character, and the force of his eloquence, to remove or mitigate these evils; but in vain: even his influence was compelled to yield beneath a combination of evils, which no human fortitude could endure, nor patience submit to. Still, Washington had the

singular address and good fortune not to quell the spirit which sought for justice, but to turn the feelings that were inflamed by wrongs into a harmless channel. On this occasion, his services to his country were not of less importance than his most brilliant military achievements; and being based on feelings of equity, benevolence, and justice, they far eclipse in moral grandeur the most sanguine trophies that a martial victor ever displayed to the applause of people intoxicated by the false glare of glory.

Thus terminated the war of seven years for American Independence, of which Hamilton had been, in so great a measure, the pillar and support; which originated in a difference apparently trifling; which was prosecuted through a series of difficulties and embarrassments unexampled in the history of mankind; and which was finally achieved by those unseen combinations and auspicious events which baffle and perplex the sagacity of man, at the same time that they excite his gratitude and admiration.

Throughout this long and arduous struggle, the whole American people displayed those virtues which most ennoble human nature; and their patience, toil, bravery, and forbearance, entitle them to rank with any nation on the face of the globe. But in a peculiar manner were they indebted to

those solid virtues in the character of Washington, which combined with his high faculties of genius and intellect to conduct them triumphantly through its fiery ordeal, and place them on the eminence whose lofty and glittering peak attracted the attention and applause of the world. Commenced without preparation, equally destitute of money, arms and discipline, the revolution depended almost wholly for success upon the genius and resources of the commander-in-chief, whose peculiar character alone fitted him to uphold it amidst adversity, rally it under defeat, and preserve it unbroken amidst convulsions. The experience in the case of General Gates fully evinced what would have been its melancholy catastrophe, had the impetuous ambition of a fiery and adventurous commander led on its starved battalions; or an intriguing and unprincipled adventurer, like Conway or Arnold, had the disbursement of its funds, or the management of that suffering and seditious mass of undisciplined men, who could only be preserved in subordination by the personal influence of George Washington—his virtues, his genius, and his patriotism.

On the 25th of November, 1783, the British evacuated New York, and the American troops took possession of the town. Washington, accompanied by Governor Clinton, now made his public entry

into the city; after which he proposed to bid adieu to his companions in arms, prior to a resignation of his military command.

The account which Gordon has given us of this parting scene, would suffer by any abridgment: "This affecting interview took place on the 4th of December. At noon, the principal officers of the army assembled at Francis' tavern; soon after which their beloved commander entered the room. His emotions were too strong to be concealed. Filling a glass, he turned to them and said, 'With a heart full of love and gratitude, I now take leave of you; I most devoutly wish that your latter days may be as prosperous and happy as your former ones have been glorious and honorable.' Having drank, he added, 'I cannot come to each of you to take my leave, but shall be obliged to you, if each of you will come and take me by the hand.' General Knox being nearest, turned to him; incapable of utterance, Washington grasped his hand, and embraced him. In the same affectionate manner, he took leave of each succeeding officer. In every eye stood the tears of dignified sensibility; and not a word was articulated to interrupt the majestic silence and the tenderness of the scene. Leaving the room, he passed through the corps of light infantry, and walked to Whitehall, where a barge awaited to carry

him to Pawles' Hook. The whole company followed in mute and solemn procession, with dejected countenances, testifying the feelings of delicious melancholy which no language can describe. Having entered the barge, he turned to the company, and, waving his hat, bade them a silent adieu. They paid him the same affectionate compliment, and after the barge had left them, returned in the same solemn manner to the place where they had assembled."

Congress was then in session at Annapolis, and thither Washington repaired to resign his commission into their hands. This eventful incident took place on the 23d of December, 1783. Having been introduced by the secretary, he delivered the following address:

"MR. PRESIDENT:—The great events on which my resignation depended, having at length taken place, I have now the honor of offering my sincere congratulations to Congress, and of presenting myself before them, to surrender into their hands the trust committed to me, and to claim the indulgence of retiring from the service of my country.

"Happy in the confirmation of our independence and sovereignty, and pleased with the opportunity afforded the United States of becoming a respectable nation, I resign with satisfaction the appoint-

ment I accepted with diffidence; a diffidence in my abilities to accomplish so arduous a task, which however was superseded by a confidence in the rectitude of our cause, the support of the SUPREME POWER OF THE UNION, and the patronage of Heaven.

“The successful termination of the war has verified the most sanguine expectations; and my gratitude for the interposition of Providence, and the assistance I have received from my countrymen, increases with every review of the momentous contest.

“While I repeat my obligations to the army in general, I should do injustice to my own feelings, not to acknowledge in this place the peculiar services and distinguished merits of the gentlemen who have been attached to my person during the war. It was impossible the choice of confidential officers to compose my family should have been more fortunate. Permit me, sir, to recommend in particular, those who have continued in the service to the present moment, as worthy of the favorable notice and patronage of Congress.

“I consider it as an indispensable duty to close this last act of my official life, by commending the interests of our dearest country, to the protection of



Almighty God, and those who have the superintendence of them to his holy keeping.

“Having now finished the work assigned me, I retire from the great theatre of action, and bidding an affectionate address to this august body, under whose orders I have so long acted, I here offer my commission, and take my leave of all the employments of public life.”

To this address Congress returned an appropriate reply, couched in the language of gratulation, gratitude and affection.

Finding himself thus relieved from the cares of public life, he now retired to Mount Vernon, followed by the esteem, admiration, and love of the whole American people.

It would, perhaps, have been more consonant with the unobtrusive and simple principles of genuine republicanism, had this virtuous and laudable feeling of veneration for their late chief been restrained within the limits of addresses, resolutions, and declarations of gratitude and attachment; instead of manifesting its extravagance in statues, monuments, and columns, whose pomp seemed to imitate the tinsel of royal governments, and might tend to corrupt the integrity of republican truth. Great as the immortal founder of the Republic was by nature, and still greater by his achievements, no outward

homage could increase his glory, no splendor of magnificence could inflate him with pride.

Unmoved by the torrent of adulation which flowed upon him, he devoted his hours to domestic happiness, and the pursuits and improvements of agriculture, which had always been his favorite occupation. His feelings on his retirement will be best understood by his own expression of them. In a letter to Governor Clinton, three days after his reaching Mount Vernon, he says: "The scene is at length closed. I feel myself eased of a load of public care, and hope to spend the remainder of my days in cultivating the affections of good men, and in the practice of the domestic virtues." In another to Lafayette, he thus unfolds the sound philosophy of his mind and the benevolent emotions of his heart: "At length, my dear Marquis, I have become a private citizen on the banks of the Potomac, and, under the shadow of my own vine and my own fig tree, free from the bustle of a camp, and the busy scenes of public life, I am solacing myself with those tranquil enjoyments, of which the soldier, who is ever in pursuit of fame—the statesman, whose watchful days and sleepless nights are spent in devising schemes to promote the welfare of his own, perhaps the ruin of other countries, as if this globe was insufficient for us all—and the courtier, who is always watching

the countenance of his prince, in the hope of catching a gracious smile, can have very little conception. I have not only retired from all public employments, but am retiring within myself, and shall be able to view the solitary walk, and tread the paths of private life, with heartfelt satisfaction. Envious of none, I am determined to be pleased with all; and this, my dear friend, being the order of my march, I will move gently down the stream of life, until I sleep with my fathers."

It was evident, however, that this desire of private contentment required a struggle; and that his mind, long accustomed to public command, could not immediately subside into the tranquil current of domestic ease. In a letter to General Knox, he thus depicts this difficulty of weaning his thoughts from the turmoil of public affairs: "I am just beginning to experience the ease and freedom from public cares, which, however desirable, takes some time to realize; for, strange as it may seem, it is nevertheless true, that it was not until lately I could get the better of my usual custom of ruminating, as soon as I awoke in the morning, on the business of the ensuing day, and of my surprise at finding, after revolving many things in my mind, that I was no longer a public man, or had any thing to do with public transactions. I feel now, however, as I conceive a wearied

traveler must do, who, after treading many a painful step with a heavy burden on his shoulders, is eased of the latter, having reached the haven to which all the former were directed, and from his house-top is looking back, and tracing with an eager eye, the meanders by which he escaped the quicksands and mires which lay in his way, and into which none but the all-powerful Guide and Dispenser of human events, could have prevented his falling."

He now devoted himself to agriculture and to plans of internal improvement; for which purpose he explored the western parts of Virginia, Ohio, and Pennsylvania, and particularly directed his attention to the advancement of the navigation of the Potomac and James rivers. Extending his views to the western country, he prepared a luminous exposition of the sound policy of connecting that section of the Union more closely with the eastern States, by means of *internal improvements*.

After these events, toward the close of 1781, Hamilton returned to his wife at Albany. He spent the ensuing winter in the enjoyment of domestic happiness in the family of General Schuyler. The proclamation of a peace was confidently expected in the spring of 1782; and it became necessary for him to select some pursuit or profession to which his ener-

gies and talents might in future be directed. After considerable deliberation, he determined to devote himself to the profession of the law. Happily for the interests of his adopted country, his great abilities were to be still consecrated to her service; and he was destined to become one of the most prominent and useful of those master spirits who moulded her constitution, who enacted her laws, who combined and consolidated her resources, and who elaborated for her that glorious career which she has since so happily completed. Hamilton accordingly apprized General Washington of his withdrawal from active service. He then resumed his residence at Albany; and inviting his old friend Colonel Troup to make his house his home, he commenced the study of the law.

To this dry and intricate science Hamilton now devoted himself with his characteristic ardor; and his vastly superior talents well adapted him to the comprehension of legal principles, and to the acquisition of legal knowledge. It is not singular therefore that his progress was rapid. Hamilton acquired in a day what an ordinary student could scarcely compass in a week. At the same time it was happily the case, that the jurisprudence which he was called upon to study was comparatively simple. Its chief burden consisted in the acquisition of the *principles*

of the common law of England, which was also the law of the colony of New York. The vast bulk of precedents and reported cases which overpower the strongest mind of the present day, with their enormous mass and their infinite and frequently contradictory variety, did not then exist. We will not be surprised therefore to learn that Hamilton prepared himself for admission to the bar in the incredibly short period of four months, and that he was licensed as an attorney at the end of that time. We know of but a single instance of a similar nature in the history of the great men of our country; and, strange to say, that man was closely and fatally connected with the career and fate of Hamilton. It was Aaron Burr. Yet short as was this period of probation, Hamilton's success in legal studies may be inferred from the fact, that during that time he prepared a "Manual on the Practice of the Law," which possessed superior merit; and which, says his friend Troup, himself a well-read lawyer, "served as an instructive grammar to future students, and became the groundwork of subsequent enlarged practical treatises."

It was also during the progress of his hurried though competent preparation for the bar, that Hamilton received a distinguished evidence of the esteem and confidence of Robert Morris, at that time the Superintendent of Finance to the United



States. This gentleman offered Hamilton the responsible office of Receiver of the Continental Taxes in the State of New York.

This honorable offer Hamilton at first declined. The quota of taxes for New York was about three hundred and seventy-five thousand dollars. He was offered a fourth per cent. on the amount collected. Mr. Morris concludes the letter proposing the appointment by saying: "I make no professions of my confidence and esteem, because I hope none are necessary; but if they are, my wish that you would accept the offer I make, is the strongest evidence I can give of them." But upon examining the nature of his duties as Receiver, and the amount of salary which he would probably realize from the appointment, not exceeding, as he supposed, a hundred pounds; and finding that those duties would seriously interfere with his legal studies, Hamilton concluded to decline the offer. He informed Mr. Morris of this determination by letter. That gentleman, still unwilling to lose the services of so able and valuable an officer, modified his proposal to Mr. Hamilton in such a way that both the salary would be increased, and his duties would be of such a nature only as not to interfere with his legal studies. This second and more urgent proposition on the part of Mr. Morris, Hamilton thought it his duty to accept.

He immediately proceeded to Poughkeepsie, where the Legislature of New York then was in session, in order to convince that body of the necessity of providing copious supplies for the Continental treasury, and establish a more efficient method of collecting the taxes. He requested to have a conference with a committee of both Houses of the Legislature, in order to urge a revisal of the tax laws. As the result of his efforts, the State Senate adopted a series of resolutions to the effect, that "the present system of the States exposes the cause to a precarious issue; that the radical source of most of the embarrassments is the want of sufficient power in Congress to effectuate that ready and perfect co-operation of the different States on which their immediate safety and future happiness depend; that experience has demonstrated the confederation to be defective in several essential points, particularly in not vesting the federal government either with a power of providing revenue for itself, or with ascertained and productive funds, secured by a sanction so solemn and general as would inspire the fullest confidence in them and make them a substantial basis of credit; and that it is essential to the common welfare that there should be, as soon as possible, a conference of the whole States on the subject."

These resolutions were drawn up by Hamilton,

and were unanimously passed by the Legislature of New York, July 22d, 1782. At his suggestion a joint committee of both Houses were appointed to report at the next session a system for establishing such fund within the State as were best suited to answer its purposes, and those of the United States; and for the more effectual collection of taxes.

On the same day of the passage of these resolutions, the Legislature of New York elected Hamilton a representative in Congress. He immediately informed Mr. Robert Morris of the progress which had been made in the functions of his office, and resigned it, in consequence of his election to the National Legislature. After the adjournment of the State Legislature, Mr. Hamilton returned to Albany, and was after examination admitted to the bar. He then arranged his affairs so as to enable him to assume the high and responsible duties which would devolve upon him, as a representative of one of the leading States in the Union in the federal Congress. And all this brilliant array of literary, military, and professional triumphs, had been won by the orphan boy of the distant island of the Indian seas, at twenty-five years of age! We question whether so rapid and so brilliant a career is presented by the history of any other statesman of any age or country.

## CHAPTER VI.

HAMILTON ELECTED A MEMBER OF CONGRESS—HIS ACTIVITY THERE—HIS FINANCIAL EXPEDIENTS—REVOLUTIONARY CLAIMS—ASSISTS IN ARRANGING THE PRELIMINARIES OF PEACE BETWEEN THE UNITED STATES AND GREAT BRITAIN—CLAIMS OF THE CONTINENTAL ARMY ON CONGRESS—HIS VIEWS ON TAXATION AND IMPORTS—SUPPORTS THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A MILITARY HOSPITAL—HIS LABORS AS CHAIRMAN OF THE MILITARY COMMITTEE—REVOLT AMONG THE PENNSYLVANIA TROOPS OF THE CONTINENTAL ARMY.

WE now enter upon that portion of the career of Hamilton when, for the first time, he moves in a sphere well adapted to his great abilities, and when he takes a distinguished part in the formation of the laws, constitution, and government of one of the greatest empires on the earth. We see him then taking the lead while a mere youth, with masterly skill and power, among aged, experienced, and renowned statesmen; and we find him at length incorporating his own principles and ideas into the very heart of that master-piece of modern statesmanship—the Federal Constitution; which will remain through all coming time a sublime monument of political wisdom and sagacity.

Hamilton took his first seat in Congress on the 25th of November, 1782. Elias Boudinot, of New

Jersey, was elected president. The sessions were held in Philadelphia. Thirty members composed the body; the most distinguished among whom were Clymer, Witherspoon, Rutledge, Elsworth. Lee, Madison, and Sullivan. Of Hamilton's fitness for the post which he now occupied, some idea may be formed from the opinion of him expressed at this time, and in reference to his connection with Congress, by Washington. To General Sullivan, a delegate from New Hampshire, he wrote: "I can venture to advance, from a thorough knowledge of him, that there are few men to be found of his age who have a more general knowledge than he possesses; and none whose soul is more firmly engaged in the cause, or who exceeds him in probity or in sterling virtue."

On the 4th of December Hamilton made his first motion in Congress. It was for the appointment of a committee of conference with the Legislature of Pennsylvania, in reference to the settlement of her accounts with the United States, and the suspension of the interest due on certain classes of certificates. The then existing state of the national finances was evidently such as to render the payment of these demands on Congress impossible from the national resources. There were but two courses which that body could adopt. One of these

was to make some substantial provision for the future payment of her claims by some newly devised expedient; or to permit Pennsylvania to withhold her own contribution to the federal government, and appropriate it to the liquidation of the claims of her own citizens on the confederation. In reference to this subject, and in answer to the loud clamors and just demands of the army—of those hardy and gallant men who had fought the battles of the Revolution, and stained its fields with their blood, Hamilton proposed, on December 6th, that the “Superintendent of Finance should represent to the States the indispensable necessity of their complying with the requisition for raising a sum equal to a year’s interest of the domestic debt, and two millions for the current service, and to point out the embarrassments which resulted from appropriations by the States of the moneys required by Congress; assuring them that they were determined to make the fullest justice to the public creditors an invariable object of their counsels and exertions.” He also proposed the appointment of a deputation to Rhode Island, to urge the grant of the imports as a measure essential to the very safety and reputation of these States, and proposed even the draft of an ordinance for its collection. The deputation to Rhode Island was appointed by Con-



gress; and Hamilton himself prepared the letter which Congress addressed to the governor of that State, dated December 11th, 1782.

Other financial cares claimed the immediate attention of Congress. One of these was the redemption of the old Continental bills which had been issued during the war, and which had especially flooded New England. The southern States were opposed to the redemption of these bills. A motion was made to invite each State to redeem their quotas of the bills on principles of substantial justice. This proposition was lost; and Hamilton then moved that Congress redeem the notes "at the rate of one to forty"—the rate of depreciation established by Congress. Finally, the whole attempt to redeem these old bills was abandoned; and they still remain to this day scattered over the land, worthless save as impressive mementos of the expedients, the poverty, the patriotism, and the rude typography of the memorable period which tried men's souls!

The next topic which came up for consideration was the claims of the officers of the revolutionary army. Their memorial was referred by Congress to a committee of which Mr. Hamilton was chairman. They reported on the 25th of January, 1783; and their report discussed five points—the means

of present payment; a settlement of arrearages of pay and security for what was already due; a commutation of the half pay for an equivalent in gross; and a settlement of the accounts of the deficiencies of rations and compensation, and a similar settlement in reference to clothing and compensation due in default of it.

The establishment of a permanent national revenue, a measure vitally essential to the future prosperity and security of the nation, now occupied the attention of Mr. Hamilton. He brought the subject in a legitimate way before Congress. The expedient which, after much deliberation, he proposed, was the valuation and appropriation of the public lands to that purpose. He suggested that when the valuation of these lands was finished, Congress should finally adjust the accounts of the United States with the States separately, agreeably to the standard thus made, making equitable abatements to such as have been more immediate sufferers by the war; and that in the mean time they would adhere to the proportions already established by Congress, in the temporary adjustment of their accounts with the federal government.

At this period Hamilton proposed a resolution in Congress, which was honorable both to himself and to its subject. He moved and carried that

“the commander-in-chief be informed that Congress would be always happy to receive his sentiments on the political and military affairs of these States, the utility of which they have on so many occasions experienced.”

Until this period the deliberations of the American national legislature had always been conducted with closed doors. At an early stage of our country's history, this precaution had been judicious and even necessary; and it frequently kept important intelligence from the possession of the enemy. After the termination of the war this advantage no longer existed. On the contrary, other preponderating disadvantages operated against the continuance of the usage. The deliberations of that body were rendered liable to constant misrepresentation. The timid viewed Congress as the theatre only for the conflict of hostile intrigues; and the influence of the great deliberative assembly of the nation had on these accounts begun perceptibly to decline. Nevertheless, the judicious exertions of Mr. Hamilton to change the prevalent custom at that time failed. The existing prejudices were found to be then insurmountable. The delegate from Rhode Island remarked that “if the member from New York wished to display his eloquence, he might address the people from the balcony.” Other observations

of a similar spirit were not wanting from several of the representatives from other States. Hamilton was compelled reluctantly to abandon a reform which subsequent experience has proved to have been most judicious.

Mr. Hamilton took an important part in arranging the preliminaries of peace between the United States and England; and in establishing that peace on terms the most favorable to this country. After the intelligence of the signature of the preliminary articles had been received, he himself prepared the instrument of final ratification. To his friend, Mr. Jay, the plenipotentiary of the United States to the Court of St. James, Mr. Hamilton wrote as follows: "Though I have not performed my promise of writing to you, which I made you when you left this country, yet I have not the less interested myself in your welfare and success. I have been witness with pleasure to every event which has had a tendency to advance you in the esteem of your country, and I may assure you with sincerity that it is as high as you could wish.

"The peace, which exceeds in the goodness of its terms, the expectations of the most sanguine, does the highest honor to those who made it. It is the more agreeable, as the time was come when thinking men began to be seriously alarmed at the inter-

nal embarrassments and exhausted state of this country.

“We have now happily concluded the great work of independence; but much remains to be done to reap the fruits of it. Our prospects are not flattering. Every day proves the inefficiency of the present confederation; yet the common danger being removed, we are receding instead of advancing in a disposition to amend its defects. The road to popularity in each State is, to inspire jealousies of the power of Congress; though nothing can be more apparent than that they have no power, and that for the want of it the resources of the country, during the war, could not be drawn out, and we at this moment experience all the mischief of a bankrupt and ruined credit. It is to be hoped that when prejudice and folly have seen themselves out of breath, we may return to reason, and correct our errors.”

Already at this early period the germ of that evil had taken root, which was calculated to weaken the power of the central government, and which has been one of the greatest obstacles with which the advancement of this confederacy has had to contend. In reference to this subject, the following remarks of Hamilton are here not inappropriate:

“Upon my first going into Congress I discovered

symptoms of a party too well disposed to subject the interests of the United States to the management of France. Though I felt in common with those who had participated in the Revolution, a lively sentiment of good-will toward a power whose co-operation, however it was and ought to have been dictated by its own interest, had been extremely useful to us, and had been afforded in a liberal and handsome manner. Yet, tenacious of the real independence of our country, and dreading the preponderance of foreign influence as the natural disease of popular government, I was struck with disgust at the appearance, in the very cradle of our republic, of a party actuated by an undue complaisance to a foreign power, and I resolved at once to resist this bias in our affairs; a resolution which has been the chief cause of the persecution I have endured in the subsequent stages of my political life.”\*

The claims of the army and the officers had not yet been finally settled. The Legislature of Massachusetts passed a resolution declaring that justice had not been done in the passage of the grant of half pay, inasmuch as it was more than an adequate reward for their services, and inconsistent with that

\* See Life of Hamilton, by John C. Hamilton, Vol. II. p. 152.



equality which ought to subsist among citizens of free and republican States; and that it tended to exalt some citizens in wealth and grandeur to the injury and oppression of others. The army had not yet been disbanded; and they adopted a resolution on the 15th of March, 1783, to the effect that they entertained the fullest confidence in the justice of Congress and their country, and were persuaded that they would not be discharged and dismissed, until their claims on the Federal government were settled.

Congress appointed a committee to report on this important subject, of which Mr. Hamilton was nominated chairman. Before they reported, Hamilton addressed a communication to Washington on the subject, desiring his advice. The great difficulty was, that the powers which Congress then possessed under the Articles of Confederation of 1781, did not enable or permit them to do any thing more than recommend the provision of funds for this purpose to the respective States; and it was already apparent that the States seemed to be jealous of the growing disposition in certain quarters to invest the Federal Legislature with an enlargement of their prerogatives. A plan had been devised by Hamilton intended to obviate this difficulty, by funding the public debt.

Hamilton was interested in behalf of the army. He had witnessed its prodigious toils and sufferings during the protracted struggle which had just ended. During its progress sixty-six battles had been fought by those heroes, whose survivors now demanded the payment of their stipulated wages. Hamilton was distressed at the evidences which were apparent, that the people were ungrateful to their deliverers, and were disposed to withhold the means necessary to liquidate these claims. He concludes his letter to Washington with these words: "I have an indifferent opinion of the honesty of this country, and ill-forebodings of its future system. Your excellency will perceive I have written with sensations of chagrin, and will make allowance for coloring, but the general picture is too true. God send us all more wisdom."

In reply to this letter Washington remarks: "I read your private letter of the 25th with pain, and contemplated the picture it had drawn with astonishment and horror. But I will yet hope for the best. The idea of redress by force is too chimerical to have had a place in the imagination of any serious mind in this army; but there is no telling what unhappy disturbances may result from distress, and distrust of justice; and as the fears and jealousies of the army are alive, I hope no resolution will be

come to for disbanding or separating the lines, till the accounts are liquidated. The suspensions of the officers are afloat, notwithstanding the resolutions which have passed on both sides; and any act which can be construed into an attempt to separate them before the accounts are settled will convey the most unfavorable ideas of the rectitude of Congress; whether well or ill founded matters not, the consequences will be the same." Washington then proceeds to mention, "in strict confidence," a scheme which had been devised secretly to make the officers of the army "puppets to establish continental funds."

The situation of Mr. Hamilton between these conflicting parties was difficult and unpleasant. In this crisis he determined to use his utmost efforts to induce Congress to comply with the claims of the army, and to prevail upon the States to vest in Congress the necessary enlargement of their power so to do, in order that the public faith, which he justly denominated the "corner stone of public safety," might be preserved unimpaired and unquestioned. In the end his labors were not without producing the desired result.

In April, 1783, the question of the surrender of prisoners and the evacuation of the military posts came up for final settlement. A difficulty arose in

Congress as to whether the treaty specifying these points meant the provisional and preliminary treaty which had been already concluded, and whether these measures should be carried out immediately after the adoption of *that* treaty; or whether the final and definite treaty which was yet to be consummated was the one intended. Mr. Hamilton suggested the propriety of the latter construction; inasmuch as he held it injudicious to make a total restoration of prisoners until they are willing to fix the precise period of their departure from the country.\*

Hamilton was chairman of the committee on peace arrangements. In a letter to Mr. Robert Morris, the Superintendent of Finance, he proposed the establishment of a National Marine, in accordance with the ideas which he had advanced at large in the *Continentalist*; inasmuch as to a commercial people maritime power must be a primary object of attention, and because a navy cannot be created or maintained without ample resources. He also suggested more directly and minutely the establishment of a national coinage. His views on the latter subject were original and profound; and though he had but recently devoted some attention to the

\* See the Madison Debates. I. pp. 443, 444.

perusal of Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations*, and had in consequence derived no small advantage from that able work, yet his views were more enlarged than his, and much better adapted to the peculiar situation and wants of the country as it then existed. He prepared and submitted to Congress a catalogue of the proper articles for taxation. In addition to the regular impost, he proposed a graduated house tax, a land tax, and various other specific taxes. His arrangement of these items was such that the easiest taxes fell upon articles of luxury, and the lightest on articles of necessity. He held the doctrine that the genius of liberty reprobates every thing in taxation, which is arbitrary, discretionary, and uncertain. It requires that every man should know exactly how much, by the operation of a regular and impartial rule, the State demands of his profits and his substance for the support of the great ends of government.

Hamilton further proposed, that the States should confer on the federal government the power of levying, for the use of the United States, specific duties on certain enumerated imported articles, and a duty of five per cent. *ad valorem* upon all other goods, excepting arms, ammunition, clothing, and articles imported for the use of the United States. He proposed that these duties should be applied to

the discharge only of the interest or principal of the debts contracted for the support of the war, and to be continued for twenty-five years. The collectors were to be appointed by the States, but were to be amenable to Congress alone. If no State made an appointment of collectors within a certain time, then Congress should themselves appoint. He suggested such an amendment to the Articles of Confederation, as would provide that all public charges and expenses should be defrayed out of a common treasury, to be supplied by the States, in proportion to the number of inhabitants of every age, sex, and condition, excepting Indians not paying taxes in each State, according to the laws of each State. These resolutions, when acceded to by every State, were to form an irrevocable and independent compact, without the concurrence of all the States, or a majority of the States represented in Congress. He also proposed that wool-cards, cotton-cards, and the wire for making them, should be exempt from taxation, in order the more effectually to promote domestic industry. Congress eventually adopted his suggestions, Massachusetts and Rhode Island alone objecting.

At this period Mr. Morris, the Superintendent of Finances, threatened to resign his office. The possibility of such an event afflicted Hamilton, who



well knew the great value of that officer's services to the country. After the passage of the revenue bill, a committee was appointed of whom Hamilton was one, to confer with him on the subject. The reasons which Mr. Morris gave for his intended course were the continued refusal of Congress to make an effectual provision to liquidate the public debts, and the probability which impended therefrom, that his administration would end in disgrace; and that the overthrow of the national credit and the ruin of his private fortune would ensue, Congress finally passed a resolution, after the report of the committee had been received, to the effect that the public service required that Mr. Morris should remain in office until the reduction of the army, and the completion of the financial arrangements connected with it.

Important labors now occupied the attention of Hamilton as chairman of the military committee. On May 1st, 1783, he submitted a report, proposing the reduction of the corps of invalids. It provided full pay for life to all those officers who were seriously disabled. It proposed the establishment of a hospital for all the non-commissioned officers and soldiers who were proper inmates for it, to be there supported for life, providing them also with rations and clothing. In order more effectually to

accomplish these desirable results, Hamilton offered a resolution which contained the following considerations:—It asserted “the indispensable necessity of making the army, when reduced, an advance of pay before they leave the field; and as there are many other engagements for which the public faith is pledged, that the States be called upon, in the most solemn manner, to make every effort for the collection of taxes; and that Congress confidently rely, for an immediate and efficacious attention to the present requisition, upon the disposition of their constituents, not only to do justice to those brave men who have suffered and sacrificed so much in the cause of their country, and whose distresses must be extreme, should they be sent from the field without a payment of a part of their well-earned dues; but also to enable Congress to maintain the faith and reputation of the United States, both which are seriously concerned in relieving the necessities of a meritorious army and fulfilling the public stipulations. That the Superintendent of Finance be directed to make the necessary arrangements for carrying the views of Congress in execution; and that he be assured of their firm support towards fulfilling the engagements he has already taken or may take on the public account during his continuance in office; and that a

further application should be made to the king of France of an additional loan of three millions of livres."

Anxious that no effort should be omitted for the fulfillment of the pledges given by Congress to apportion to the troops specific quantities of land, he prepared a resolution "that a committee should be appointed to consider of the best manner of carrying into execution the engagements of the United States for certain allowances of land to the army at the conclusion of the war." This subject was referred to a committee for consideration. After its deliberations were concluded, Hamilton drew up a report, which was adopted. It provided that until the lands granted by Congress should be located and surveyed, certificates should be given to the officers and soldiers as evidences of their claims, and to the legal representatives of those who had fallen during the war. Congress at length began to entertain the same apprehensions which afflicted Washington; and a resolution was offered to discharge that part of the army which had been enlisted for service during the war. Hamilton proposed as a substitute, that the commander-in-chief be instructed to grant furloughs to those soldiers who had enlisted for the war, with an assurance of their permanent discharge immediately after the

conclusion of the definitive treaty, and that they should then be conducted to their homes in a manner most convenient to themselves, and that they should be allowed to retain their arms which, though the property of the State, had become endeared to them as mementos of their past services.

The attention of this great statesman—whose capacious and vigilant mind seemed to grasp intuitively all the multiform interests and wants of the nation then struggling into political existence, and who, at this early age of twenty-six, displayed a profundity and universality of mind unequalled in the whole history of statesmen—was turned to the removal of all the obstacles which still impeded the execution of the treaty with England; and to measures intended to secure the frontiers of the United States. And in order to prevent any infractions of the treaty by the United States, he introduced a resolution requiring the removal of all obstructions to the recovery of debts, the restitution of all confiscated property on receiving an equivalent, and the future discontinuance of all confiscations, as being in harmony with that spirit of moderation and liberality which ought ever to characterize the deliberations and measures of a free and enlightened people.

In the performance of his duties as chairman of the

military committee, Hamilton undertook to remedy the existing evils in the Quartermaster General's department. He saw and felt the difficulties which attended the proper establishment of military supplies. He proposed that that officer should be intrusted with the appointment of all the sub-officers of that department; that he should give them their designations; that he should apportion their pay; and that he should specify the means of transportation to be allowed to each rank in the army, and their respective amount of forage and subsistence.

As chairman of the committee on peace arrangements, he prepared a report in reference to the department of foreign affairs. It provided that the secretary of that department should occupy the position of chief of the diplomatic corps. It asserted that it was his duty to lay before Congress such plans for conducting the political and commercial intercourse of the United States with foreign powers as might appear to him to be best adapted to promote their interests. It allowed him the same salary as was provided for a minister to a foreign court; and permitted him to have an official secretary to be nominated by himself, who was to receive the same compensation as the secretary of an embassy. The report also specified the salary of each minister, and declared him to be possessed

of consular powers in the country in which he resided, and as having full control over all vice-consuls and commercial agents. Vice-consuls were to be appointed without salaries, and to be permitted to engage in trade.

The ideas of Mr. Hamilton in reference to a peace establishment, may be inferred from the following provisions contained in his report on that subject. He recommended an armament in each State, consisting of four regiments of infantry and one of artillery, with two additional battalions, to be incorporated in a corps of engineers, and a regiment of dragoons. He proposed that the States should intrust to Congress the right to appoint the regimental officers; and he suggested that no officer should consider it a violation of his rights, if any other officer, who has had an opportunity to distinguish himself, and has done so, should receive an extra promotion on that account. He recommended the appointment of an agent of marine, to prepare the way for the future erection of maritime fortifications; to obtain information in reference to the establishment of ports, and the formation of a navy. He suggested the building of arsenals, and the manufacture of such articles as were necessary for military operations, sufficient to equip ninety thousand men. He named Springfield, West Point,



and Camden, as suitable places of deposit. The details of a general hospital for invalid soldiers were also given. He proposed the appointment of a military board to revise the regulations and digest a general ordinance for service of the troops of the United States, and another for the service of the militia.

The deliberations of Congress were at this crisis interrupted by an unexpected occurrence, which, at that critical period of our national history might have led to the most serious results.

The old levies of the Continental army had quietly disbanded and returned home, satisfied with the poor and inadequate provision which Congress had made for the payment of the sums which were due them at the termination of the war. The new levies, many of whom had never seen a battle, were neither so patriotic nor so reasonable. A portion of these were stationed in the barracks at Philadelphia and Lancaster. They refused to accept their discharges, without immediate payment. They presented a petition to Congress stating that fact. Congress took no notice of it. The insurgents from Lancaster marched to Philadelphia, and great fears were entertained that the bank would be attacked, and that plunder and rapine would ensue. Congress removed to Princeton, and ordered General

St. Clair to inform the malecontents that if they returned to Lancaster, their demands would be complied with. They refused to do so. An attempt was made to induce the executive of Pennsylvania to call out the militia to preserve the public peace. He declined. Congress then ordered General Howe to march to Philadelphia to disarm the insurgents, and to bring their leaders to trial. These decisive measures were found to be effectual; and the rebellion was quickly quelled. Hamilton was the chairman of the committee which waited on the executive of Pennsylvania; and to his suggestions the final establishment of tranquillity and order was in a great measure attributable. This labor concluded his public services, during the eight months of his connection with this important session of Congress.

Before the adjournment of this Congress Hamilton had prepared a series of resolutions, in view of the existing defects of the Confederation, by which Congress invited the attention of the States to the necessity of a revisal and amendment of it. These resolutions earnestly recommended to the several States to appoint a convention, with full powers to revise the Confederation, and to adopt and propose such alterations as to them should seem necessary, to be finally approved or rejected by the States respectively; and that a committee be appointed to

prepare an address on the subject. But after mature consultation with his friends in Congress, he came to the conclusion that the movement was premature, and that the people and their representatives were not yet prepared for so important and vital a proposition. Yet this suggestion of Hamilton became eventually the initiatory idea of that magnificent fabric of a general government, whose splendid and harmonious proportions now adorn the land of the Revolution; which now embraces within its capacious arms the inhabitants of a vast continent, and is the nursing mother to the freest and most prosperous government and people on the globe !

## CHAPTER VII.

HAMILTON RETURNS TO ALBANY—RESUMES THE PRACTICE OF THE LAW—PARTICULARS RESPECTING HIS FIRST CASE—HIS FORENSIC LEARNING AND ELOQUENCE—HIS PUBLICATION OF "PHOCION"—ITS EFFECTS—HE DRAFTS THE CONSTITUTION OF THE BANK OF NEW YORK—HAMILTON'S VIEWS ON THE SUBJECT OF AMERICAN SLAVERY—HIS CONDUCT IN REFERENCE TO A SLAVE—LAFAYETTE'S OPINIONS ON THE SAME SUBJECT.

AFTER the adjournment of Congress Hamilton retired, in October, 1783, to his family at Albany. His career in the National Legislature had covered him with glory. His abilities had there outshone all his associates, both as an orator, as a statesman, as a financier, as a writer, and as a publicist. He may without the least exaggeration be termed a prodigy; especially when his career is viewed with reference to his youthful age, and to the small proportion of preliminary instruction which he had enjoyed. At the age of twenty-six he had been the leading spirit, the commanding genius, of the great American Continental Congress! And this rare and remarkable pre-eminence had been willingly and not grudgingly assigned him by the aged fathers of the Republic, who saw with pride and

without envy the splendid superiority of their youthful associate, and were anxious to appropriate them to the service of their common country. He had long possessed the full confidence of Washington. He had now secured the admiration and esteem of both the nation and of their chosen representatives.

It was the purpose of Hamilton on returning to Albany, to retire from the cares of political life, and devote himself entirely to the profession which he had chosen. From Albany he intended, immediately after the evacuation of New York by the British, to remove thither. He did so in November, 1783. Before leaving Philadelphia, he had written to his wife with his usual ardor and affection: "I give you joy of the happy conclusion of this important work in which your country has been engaged. Now, in a very short time, I hope we shall be happily settled in New York. My love to your father. Kiss my boy a thousand times. A thousand loves to yourself." Such were the domestic feelings of the great master *intellect* of the revolutionary era of American history!

It may readily be supposed that the national fame which Hamilton had already acquired, together with his own indomitable industry and his transcendent abilities, would soon procure for him a large and

lucrative practice in the legal profession. Such was the fact. During five years he devoted himself in a very considerable degree to his professional duties, and he very soon acquired a high fame as an advocate. The richness of his mind prevented him from becoming a mere case-lawyer. He did not convert his memory into a lumbering depository of precedents. Yet he was familiar with the principles of the science; and this knowledge, together with his rare eloquence, his vigorous logic, his persuasive and attractive manner, rendered him the most efficient and popular advocate at the New York bar, with the exception of Aaron Burr alone. That great, bad man, with the candor which usually attends true genius, acknowledged the superior talents and eloquence of his rival; and frequently spoke of him as a man of fertile imagination and a powerful declaimer.\*

The very first case in which Hamilton was employed was one of more than ordinary interest. It was tried in the Mayor's Court of New York. The suit was brought to recover the rents, issues, and profits of property which was held by the defendant under an order of Sir Henry Clinton; and was founded on what was known as the Tres

\* See Memoirs of Aaron Burr, by M. L. Davis, Vol. II. p. 22.



pass Act. This act allowed suits to be brought by persons who had deserted their residences in consequence of the invasion of the British, against those who had occupied them during the war; and took away the plea, in defense of that occupancy, that they were authorized by a military order. The defense contended that the present case was not within the statute; that the suit was barred by the laws of nations; and that the recent treaty extinguished the right of action given by the statute.

This suit possessed great interest inasmuch as its decision, immediate or final, would decide the fate of other property to an immense amount. It was contended that the national faith and honor were involved in the issue. It would determine whether the State tribunals would recognize the laws of nations and of the confederacy as the rule of their decisions, when these came in conflict with a mere local statute. The parties to the present cause were, as plaintiff, a fugitive and exile, a poor American widow, whose whole worldly wealth was involved in the issue; and a defendant, a rich English merchant, and a partisan of the British king. The cause was tried while party spirit still ran high, in a court-room which itself bore evidences of the recent occupancy of a brutal and savage foreign soldiery. The attorney-general appeared for the plaintiff, and

in behalf of the State authority. Mr. Hamilton had been retained by the aristocratic and detested foreigner.

Never did an advocate defend a more unpopular cause. Yet never did an advocate display more eloquence, more ingenuity, more ability. Hamilton began by asserting that the position of the respective parties to the suit, whether rich or poor, was an indifferent inquiry. He looked only at the abstract justice of the case. He dwelt eloquently upon the importance of the principle at issue. He declared that the decision would affect the reputation of the young Republic in the distant nations of Europe, who had just learned with surprise and perhaps with envy, of the establishment of the liberties and the vindication of the glory of the American name. It would decide the future complexion of our jurisprudence. It was the first case of the kind, and would form the precedent of hundreds to come, which would hereafter determine the destination of millions of property.

He then asserted that the laws of nations, and the laws of war, form part of and were recognized by the Common Law of England. He stated the two great divisions of the laws of nations, the internal, binding on the consciences of nations; the external, controlled by positive enactments; the former in-

voluntary, the second voluntary and arbitrary. He proceeded to define the proper method of the construction of statutes, and applied the principle contended for to that case. He went into an examination of the jurisdiction of the court; and explained the distinctions which were to be allowed between a citizen and a British subject in the United States, who claimed the protection of international law. He concluded with a bold exposure of the fraud and injustice of the plaintiff's demand, and with an effective appeal to preserve the faith and honor of the nation, thus pledged in the articles of peace to those who held titles to property obtained during the foreign occupancy of the city. He concluded not unfitly with Seneca's well known maxim: "*Fides sanctificissimum humani pectoris bonum est.*"

The logic and eloquence of Hamilton won the day, notwithstanding that a powerful current of popular prejudice ran against his cause. A decision was entered in favor of the defendant. The court also ruled that "our Union is known and legalized in our Constitution, and adopted as a fundamental law in the first act of our legislature. The federal compact has vested Congress with full and exclusive powers to make peace and war. This treaty they have made and ratified, and rendered its obligation perpetual; and we are clearly of opinion that no

State in this Union can alter or abridge, in a single point, the Federal Articles or the Treaty."

Although the learning and ability of the defendant's advocate could convince the court, it could not overpower the force of popular prejudice. A town meeting was called, which, while complimenting Hamilton for the ability displayed by him in the conduct of the cause, proceeded to stigmatize the decision of the court as having a tendency to curtail the liberties of the people; asserting that if their independence was worth fighting for to obtain, it was worth contending for to perpetuate. The legislature were memorialized on the subject; and that subservient body decreed that the court's decision was subversive of all law and order, and that hereafter such men only should be appointed as judges who would administer the laws fearlessly, intelligently, and justly.

The result of this his first cause was to elevate Hamilton very greatly in public estimation as an advocate. The more wealthy portions of the citizens regarded his course with great favor; and very soon their approval took substantial forms of patronage, by intrusting to his care their commercial interests, when litigated in courts of justice.

The excitement produced by the trial of this important case long continued to agitate the commu-

nity. Hamilton thought it advisable to publish a labored argument on the principles involved in the case; and it appeared under the title of "Phocion." This production, written with his usual ability, contains an earnest appeal to the friends of liberty, and to the true Whigs, on the enormity of recent laws passed by men who were bent on mischief, who were practising on the passions of the people, and who were propagating the most inflammatory and pernicious doctrines. This production appeared in 1784, when the author was twenty-seven years of age.\* It was eagerly read throughout the whole country, and was republished in London. It drew forth many answers. One alone was worthy of notice; and it was signed "Mentor." To this Hamilton rejoined in a production entitled: "Phocion's Second Letter, containing Remarks on Mentor's Reply."

An idea of the style and spirit of this celebrated production may be formed from the following extract. The clearness, force and beauty of his composition will strike every appreciative reader.

"The body of the people of this State are too firmly attached to the democracy, to permit the principles of a small number to give a different tone

\* See Works of Alexander Hamilton, edited by John C. Hamilton, Vol. II. p. 400.

to that spirit. *The present law of inheritance, making an equal division among the children of the parents' property*, will soon melt down those great estates, which, if they continued, might favor the power of the few. The number of the disaffected, who are so from speculative notions of government, is small. The great majority of those who took part against us, did it from accident, from the dread of the British power, and from the influence of others to whom they had been accustomed to look up. Most of the men who had that kind of influence are already gone. The residue, and their adherents must be carried along by the torrent, and with very few exceptions, if the government is mild and just, will soon come to view it with approbation and attachment. There is a bigotry in politics as well as in religion, equally pernicious to both. The zealots of either description are ignorant of the advantage of a spirit of toleration. It is remarkable, though not extraordinary, that those characters, throughout the States, who have been principally instrumental in the Revolution, are the most opposed to persecuting measures. Were it proper, I might trace the truth of this remark, from that character which has been the first in conspicuousness, through the several gradations of those, with very few ex-



ceptions, who either in the civil or military line have borne a distinguished part.”

He concludes as follows :

“Those who are at present intrusted with power in all these infant republics, hold the most sacred deposit that ever was confided to human hands. It is with governments as with individuals, first impressions and early habits give a lasting bias to the temper and character. Our governments hitherto have no habits. How important to the happiness, not of America alone, but of mankind, that they should acquire good ones ! If we set out with justice, moderation, liberality, and a scrupulous regard to the constitution, the government will acquire a spirit and tone productive of permanent blessings to the community. If, on the contrary, the public councils are guided by humor, passion, and prejudice—if, from resentment to individuals or a dread of partial inconveniences, the constitution is slighted or explained away upon every frivolous pretext—the future spirit of government will be feeble, distracted, and arbitrary. The rights of the subject will be the sport of every vicissitude. There will be no settled rule of conduct, but every thing will fluctuate with the alternate prevalency of contending factions.

“The world has its eye upon America. The no-

ble struggle we have made in the cause of liberty, has occasioned a kind of revolution in human sentiment. The influence of our example has penetrated the gloomy regions of despotism, and has pointed the way to inquiries which may shake it to its deepest foundations. Men begin to ask every where, 'Who is this tyrant, that dares to build his greatness on our misery and degradation? What commission has he to sacrifice millions to the wanton appetites of himself and the few minions that surround his throne?'

"To ripen inquiry into action, it remains for us to justify the Revolution by its fruits. If the consequences prove that we have really asserted the cause of human happiness, what may not be expected from so illustrious an example? In a greater or less degree, the world will bless and imitate.

"But if experience, in this instance, verifies the lesson long taught by the enemies of liberty—that the bulk of mankind are not fit to govern themselves—that they must have a master, and were only made for the rein and the spur—we shall then see the final triumph of despotism over liberty. The advocates of the latter must acknowledge it to be an *ignis fatuus* and abandon the pursuit. With the greatest advantages for promoting it that ever a people had, we *shall have betrayed the cause of human*

*nature!* Let those in whose hands it is placed, pause for a moment, and contemplate with an eye of reverence the vast trust committed to them. Let them retire into their own bosoms and examine the motives which there prevail. Let them ask themselves this solemn question—Is the sacrifice of a few mistaken or criminal individuals an object worthy of the shifts to which we are reduced to evade the constitution and our national engagements? Then let them review the arguments that have been offered with dispassionate candor, and if they even doubt the propriety of the measures they may be about to adopt, let them remember that in a doubtful case the constitution ought never to be hazarded without extreme necessity.”

So effectively did “Phocion” tell on the feelings and interests of the opponents of Hamilton, that the most furious animosity was aroused against him. An association of these men formed themselves into a club, and at one of their secret meetings they resolved that Hamilton should be challenged, and that in case the first challenger should fall, the whole club would challenge him in succession, should it be necessary, in order to compass his death. But one member opposed this infamous proposition; and that member was “Mentor.” The individual who had assumed this pseudonym was

named Isaac Ledgard, and he at once had the honor and magnanimity to declare: "This, gentlemen, cannot be. What? You write what you please; and because you cannot refute what he writes in reply, you form a combination to take his life." The proposition was at length abandoned. Some time afterward Hamilton, who had heard of this conspiracy and its defeat, dined in company with Ledgard. Hearing him addressed as "Mentor," Hamilton immediately arose and taking him by the hand said: "Then you, my dear sir, are the friend who saved my life." Ledgard replied: "That, you know, is what you did for me."

Although Hamilton was at this period deeply engaged in his professional pursuits, he found time to direct his attention to the financial interests of his own State. The operation of the Bank of North America having given much dissatisfaction even to its friends, the establishment of a Bank of New York was proposed, and its plan submitted to the examination of Hamilton. While this enterprise was under consideration, the plan of a Land Bank was devised by Chancellor Livingston, and a petition was offered to the legislature for a charter. This was a dangerous and objectionable scheme, but one which seemed to obtain much favor with the people. They rashly supposed that it would be a veritable

“philosopher’s stone,” and turn rocks, earth, and trees into gold.

The constitution of the Bank of New York which Hamilton drew up was adopted; half a million of dollars were subscribed at a single meeting; and he was chosen one of its directors, and appointed chairman of the committee to prepare its by-laws.

At that early period of the history of the American Confederacy, the subject of negro slavery had not attracted a large degree of attention, or possessed a vital interest. A single instance only is recorded in the life of Hamilton, in which he came personally and directly in contact with the subject. An association was formed in 1784, in New York, opposed to the existence of slavery in that State, and designed to accomplish its gradual and legal removal. Lafayette, still the personal and intimate friend of Hamilton, alluded in one of his letters to this subject: “I find in one of your Gazettes an association against the slavery of negroes, which seems to be worded in such a way as to give no offense to the moderate men in the southern States. As I have ever been partial to my brethren of that color, I wish, if you are in the society, you would move in your own name for my being admitted on the list.” This association was a branch

of a similar one already established in Philadelphia. John Jay was its president. Hamilton was one of its leading members, and was chairman of a committee appointed to devise ways and means to accomplish the object of the society.

In performance of his duty as chairman of this committee he proposed a resolution in the society to the effect, that every member of it should manumit his own slaves. This resolution was warmly debated and then postponed. He himself never owned a slave, and consequently had none to manumit; but having been informed that a domestic whom he had hired was about to be sold by her master, he purchased her freedom for her. He thus practically obeyed the injunction contained in the resolution which he had proposed to the society; but which few of the members were willing to imitate or execute. Disgusted with their inconsistency and selfishness, he afterward discontinued his attendance on their meetings; although his own sentiments on this grave question never were known to have undergone any alteration.



## CHAPTER VIII.

ESTABLISHMENT OF THE SOCIETY OF THE CINCINNATI—ITS CONSTITUTION AND PURPOSES—POPULAR PREJUDICE AGAINST IT—JEFFERSON'S OPINIONS IN REFERENCE TO IT—THE CONVENTION AT ANNAPOLIS—HAMILTON'S ACTIVITY AND INFLUENCE IN THAT BODY—IS ELECTED A MEMBER OF THE NEW YORK LEGISLATURE—HIS LABORS THERE—IS THE MEANS OF ESTABLISHING THE NEW YORK UNIVERSITY,

THE year 1786 still finds the illustrious, and even yet youthful, subject of this memoir actively devoted to his professional duties in New York. Nevertheless he took a prominent share in many movements which concerned the honor and prosperity of the country. One of these was with reference to the celebrated society of the Cincinnati.

This association had been formed immediately after the conclusion of the revolutionary war. Its members were composed of the officers of the army, and it was established at the encampment on the Hudson. Its avowed and only object was to aid in preserving the liberties which its members had aided so effectually to obtain; and more especially to promote national union, and render permanent the mutual affection of the officers by acts of brotherly courtesy and beneficence. It is enough to say in

defense of this society, that George Washington was president-general. It had separate branches, composed of the officers who resided in each State, connected with and subordinate to the general society. One of the peculiar features of the society was that its members were composed, not only of the officers then living, of all grades, but that the succession of membership should continue to their eldest male posterity.

There was evidently nothing dangerous or anti-republican in the principles and purposes of this organization. Its chief aim was to keep alive the memory of those stirring times, and of those great toils and labors, in which its members had participated. It was natural that, after seven years of association together in such scenes as those which characterized the progress of the revolutionary struggle, its actors should not wish to let their recollection and their freshness perish; but rather to cherish them in full and cheerful remembrance, as long as was compatible with the inevitable mutability of all human affairs.

Singular as it may now appear, this society became the object, in the year 1786, of violent popular prejudices and abuse. It was asserted that the society was intended to create a race of hereditary patricians, to invade and endanger the liberties of

the country; and that it was repugnant to the genius of free institutions.

Nor was this opposition confined to the vulgar and the obscure. Many persons joined in the clamor, who, having only been engaged in the civil service, were jealous of every thing with which they were not identified. Mr. Jefferson advised the Cincinnati that they would do better and wiser to melt down their eagles. Mr. Adams denounced the association as an inroad on the first principles of equality, and as an institution intended to sow the seeds of vanity, ambition, corruption, discord and sedition among the community.

A general meeting of the society was at length called, in consequence of the popular outcry. Washington presided over its deliberations. A motion was made to abolish the hereditary provision in the constitution of the society. The State society of New York also met on July 4th, 1786. Before this body Hamilton delivered an oration on the subject; and as chairman of a committee he presented a report, in which his views of the proposed change are embodied. He strongly opposed the abolition of the hereditary provision, as being necessary to the perpetuation of the society, and as being harmless in itself. At the same time, however, he recommends several alterations in the con-

stitution of minor importance. He suggested that there should be a distinction established between honorary and regular members. His suggestions were eventually adopted; and the progress of time has long since clearly evinced not only the total absurdity of the outcry which was made against the Cincinnati at that period, but also the harmlessness, the propriety, and the excellence of the institution in every imaginable respect. It remains to this day one of the purest, noblest, and most honorable mementos of the most glorious era of American history. Her medals still bear upon them, not unfitly, the appropriate maxim: *Omnia reliquit servare rempublicam*; and they still proclaim the patriotic principle and hope, in reference to the liberties which its members themselves had purchased: *Esto perpetua*.

An invidious mind might detect a spark of *pride* in this sentiment, but a liberal one can perceive nothing except the most exalted patriotism!

The pride of station, and the ostentation of rank peculiar to royal governments, are not only necessary to the safety of the king, but indispensable to the pomp and glitter of a court; hence they are as foreign to the simplicity of a republic, and to the virtuous habits of a free people, as pure republican principles would be inconsistent with, as well as

destructive of, royal power and regal magnificence.

Happily for the fame of Hamilton the project for the establishment of the society of the Cincinnati did not originate with him. "This idea, (says Marshall) was suggested by General Knox, and matured in a meeting composed of the generals, and of deputies from the regiments, at which Major-General le Baron Steuben presided. An agreement was then entered into, by which the officers were to constitute themselves into one society of friends, to *endure as long as they should endure, or any of THEIR ELDEST MALE POSTERITY*; and in failure thereof, any *collateral branches* who might be judged worthy of becoming its supporters and members were to be admitted into it. To mark their veneration for that celebrated Roman, between whose situation and their own, they found some similitude, they were to be denominated the "Society of the Cincinnati." Individuals of the respective States, distinguished for their patriotism and abilities, might be admitted as honorary members for life, provided their numbers should at no time exceed a ratio of one to four.

"The society was to be *designated* by A MEDAL OF GOLD, representing the American eagle, bearing on its breast *the devices of the ORDER*, which was to be suspended by a *deep blue ribbon, edged with white,*'

&c. Of this new order, Washington was unanimously chosen president.

“Without experiencing any open opposition,” (says Marshall) “this institution was carried into complete effect; and its honors, especially by the foreign officers, were sought with great avidity. But soon after it was organized, those jealousies, which in its first moments had been concealed, burst forth into open view. In October, 1783, a pamphlet was published by Mr. Burk, of South Carolina, for the purpose of rousing the apprehensions of the public, and of directing its resentments against the society. Perceiving in the Cincinnati the foundation of an hereditary order, whose base, from associating with the *military* the *chiefs* of the powerful families in each State, would acquire a degree of solidity and strength admitting of any superstructure, he portrayed, in that fervid and infectious language which is the genuine offspring of passion, the *dangers* to result from the fabric which would be erected on it. The ministers of the United States too, in Europe, and the political theorists who cast their eyes toward the west for support to favorite systems, having the privileged orders constantly in view, were loud in their condemnation of an institution, from which a race of nobles was expected to spring.



Throughout every State *the alarm was spread, and a high degree of jealousy pervaded the mass of the people.*"

Hamilton endeavored to procure a modification of some of the more aristocratic features of the institution, but his efforts were without success.

The same apprehensions in reference to this society have continued to exist until the present period, although they are much diminished by the extinction of its original members, and by the progress of free and liberal principles.

In a letter to General Washington, dated April 16, 1784, Mr. Jefferson gives, at full length, his objections to the institution of the Cincinnati, from which we introduce the following brief passage: "The objections of those who are opposed to the institution shall be briefly sketched. You will readily fill them up. They urge that it is against the *confederation*, against the letter of some of our constitutions, against the spirit of all of them; that the foundation on which all these are built is the *natural equality* of man, the denial of every pre-eminence but that annexed to legal office, and particularly the denial of a pre-eminence by birth; that however, in their present dispositions, citizens might decline accepting honorary installments into the order, a time may come when a well directed

distribution of them might draw into the order all the men of talents, of office, and wealth; and, in this case, would probably procure an engraftment into the government; that in this they will be supported by their *foreign* members, and the wishes and influence of foreign courts; that experience has shown that the hereditary branches of modern governments are the patrons of privilege and prerogative, and not of the natural rights of the people, whose oppressors they generally are; that, besides these evils, which are remote, others may take place more immediately; that a distinction is kept up between the civil and military, which it is for the happiness of both to obliterate; that when the members assemble they will be proposing to do something, and what that something may be, will depend on actual circumstances; that being an organized body, under habits of subordination, the first obstruction to enterprise will be already surmounted; *that the moderation and VIRTUE of a single character have probably prevented this revolution from being closed, as most others have been, by a subversion of that liberty it was intended to establish; that he is not immortal, and his successor, or some of his successors, may be led by false calculations into a less certain road to glory.*"

It has always been known that Mr. Jefferson was opposed to the institution of the Cincinnati, as con-

taining the germ of an *hereditary nobility*; but to what precise extent he carried his objections, it is difficult to discover. The foregoing letter, published by his grandson, in the volume that contains his memoir of his own life, throws some light on the subject. It appears, from the preceding extract, that he opposed it on the broadest grounds of *democracy, equality, and popular sovereignty and rule*.

His letters from Paris in 1785 and '86, to Washington himself, as well as others, breathe the purest attachment and the highest veneration for that great patriot; from whom he does not seem to have become alienated till subsequent events and his own ambition generated feelings of an opposite nature: all produced by the new situation which he was called to occupy in the government. It is remarkable also that at the dates here referred to, he took peculiar pleasure in discoursing on matters connected with pomp, splendor, and ceremony; so that the *Court of Versailles*, instead of disgusting his republican taste, seems on the contrary to have been highly pleasing to him. Being intrusted at this time with a commission to procure an artist to execute an *equestrian statue of Washington*, he appears to have taken great pleasure, and spent much labor in that undertaking; which led him to a protracted correspondence, in which his overflowing

affection for Washington was constantly manifested, which could not fail to awaken in the breast of the first President a corresponding sentiment of attachment, esteem, and confidence.

During this year (1786) Hamilton's career was distinguished by the active and efficient part which he took in the Annapolis convention. He had never abandoned his views in reference to the great design of a national constitution. He wished that New York should definitively adopt or reject the revenue system of 1783; and in case she rejected it, that she should appoint commissioners to attend the Annapolis convention, the aims and purposes of which were solely commercial. He regarded this commercial convention as a preliminary measure to a general convention to form a federal constitution. Commissioners to the Annapolis convention were appointed by the legislature of New York, of whom Hamilton was one. New Jersey, Delaware, and Pennsylvania also appointed commissioners. Those selected by New York, in addition to Hamilton, were Duane, R. R. Livingston, R. C. Livingston, Benson, and Gansevoort. Benson and Hamilton alone proceeded to Annapolis.\* After some deliberation a committee

\* The States of New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, and North Carolina had also appointed commissioners; but they did not attend. New York, Virginia, Pennsylvania, Delaware, and New Jersey alone were represented.

was appointed to prepare an address to the States, and the draft of this address was written by Hamilton. It was offered and adopted on the 14th September, 1786.

This address described with great force and clearness the condition of the States, and the necessity for a more efficient government. It urged the propriety of a speedy meeting of delegates from all the colonies of the Confederacy. It asserted that important defects existed in the commercial system of the federal government; that, in consequence, embarrassments characterized the existing state of our national affairs, both foreign and domestic; that the best remedy for these would be the assembling of a general convention from all the States; that a suitable time and place for the assembling of such a convention would be the second Monday of May, 1787, at Philadelphia; and that the great aim and purpose of that convention should be to render the constitution of the federal government adequate to meet the existing exigencies of the Union; and report such an act for that purpose to the United States in Congress assembled, as, when agreed to by them, and afterward confirmed by the Legislature of each State, will most effectually provide for the same.

Immediately after the adjournment of the Con-

vention of Annapolis, which had resulted only in *recommending* wise and judicious measures to the several colonies, Hamilton was elected to the Legislature of New York. That State had, under the guidance of its governor, Clinton, obstinately refused to acquiesce in the adoption of the proposed revenue system of 1783. It was thought by the party at whose head Clinton stood, that the interests of New York as a separate State were different from, and antagonistic to the operation of the system of 1783, which nearly all the other members of the confederacy had approved. One of the provisions of that law was, that the revenues due to the federal government from the State should be collected by federal officers, who were amenable only to the authority of the United States. The idea of State aggrandizement alone guided the policy of Governor Clinton, forgetful of the necessity and duty of protecting, in a confederacy like this, the interests of the central government.

At this period the influence of Governor Clinton, who had already occupied his high place for nearly ten years, was almost supreme in New York; but Hamilton was nominated for the assembly by the wise and patriotic party who opposed his contracted policy; and as their representative he was elected, his great personal popularity contributing in no small



degree, to the accomplishment of this result. General Schuyler was at the same time their candidate for the Senate. The legislature met in January, 1787, in the city of New York. The opening address of the governor was referred to a committee of which Hamilton was a member. He drew up its report. The committee having made a report in which they abstained from either censuring or commending the conduct of Governor Clinton, Hamilton addressed the house.\* His speech was lengthy, but plain, simple, and argumentative. He went over the whole subject involved in the controversy. He proposed conciliation, and an acquiescence with the recommendation of Congress on the subject of the revenue. But so strong were the prevalent prejudices, and so powerful was the party of Governor Clinton, that when the vote was taken on the report, the conciliatory substitute which Hamilton had offered was rejected by thirty-six to nine.

Hamilton's presence in the Legislature of 1787 was marked by his usual industry and ability. He moved a reference of the laws which seemed apparently to contravene the provisions of the late treaty

\* The chief dispute about the conduct of the governor was, whether or not he should have called a meeting of the legislature at an earlier date, according to the requisition of Congress, in order to approve of the act of 1783.

with Great Britain; another relative to debts due to persons within the enemy's lines; and another in reference to the Trespass Act, already referred to in these pages. He took a prominent part in a discussion which arose in regard to excluding from seats in the legislature all those who were either pensioners or officers of the federal government. He delivered an elaborate speech in reference to the election laws, and upon the important question whether the legislature possessed the power of abridging the constitutional rights of the people.

As a member of the Committee of Ways and Means, he brought forward a plan which he had long before matured, to exclude arbitrary valuations in taxation. His great purpose was to substitute a mode by which each individual might himself estimate the amount of his taxes, without being dependent on the caprices of another, and to secure, as far as possible, certainty and equality in taxation. He also directed his attention to criminal jurisprudence. He proposed a law for the speedy trial of small offenders. He introduced clearer definitions of all the grades of crime, and a more efficient method of obtaining the operation and benefit of the Habeas Corpus Act. In all his proposed amendments in reference to criminal law, benevolence to

the fallen, and clemency to the guilty, were the leading principles which guided him. He devised a plan to build up a great system of public instruction upon comprehensive principles, to incorporate that system into the public policy of the State, and to render it by constant and familiar use an indispensable and cherished want of the community. He proposed an institution for public instruction under the form and title of a University, to be known as the "University of the State of New York;" and to his energy and enlightened patriotism that city is indebted for the stately presence and benignant influence of her noble University; and for the establishment of several of the most useful Academies which now exist throughout the State.

## CHAPTER IX.

DIFFICULTIES BETWEEN THE STATES OF VERMONT AND NEW YORK—  
HAMILTON'S SPEECH ON THE SUBJECT—A FEDERAL CONSTITUTION PRO-  
POSED BY HAMILTON—CONDITION AND WANTS OF THE COUNTRY—ARTI-  
CLES OF CONFEDERATION—VIRGINIA PROPOSES A FEDERAL CONVENTION  
—HAMILTON CHOSEN TO REPRESENT THE STATE OF NEW YORK IN IT—  
HIS IMPORTANT LABORS IN THAT CONVENTION—DRAFTS THE CONSTITU-  
TION OF THE UNITED STATES—PROVISIONS OF THAT CONSTITUTION—  
GREAT DIFFICULTIES TO BE OVERCOME—ITS FINAL ADOPTION.

IN March, 1787, a crisis of great importance and danger occurred in our national history. The State of Vermont was at that time, in effect, an independent sovereignty. She had never united with the confederacy. She was a stranger, and seemed soon about to assume the attitude of an enemy to the Union. Many of the inhabitants of New York had purchased from that State lands in the disputed territory claimed by Vermont. Mr. Hamilton, then a member of the New York Legislature, introduced a bill "to authorize the delegates of New York in Congress to accede to and confirm the independence and sovereignty of the people inhabiting the district of country commonly called Vermont." He accompanied this bill with appropriate remarks, showing how it was

the only means of quieting the existing disturbance, and averting the impending dangers of intestine war.

The bill was violently opposed by counsel in behalf of those citizens who claimed lands within the jurisdiction of that State. Richard Harrison, a distinguished lawyer of New York, was heard in their behalf at the bar of the House. He argued against the bill with great learning and ability. He attempted to prove that it was unconstitutional, impolitic, and destructive of the rights of the citizens of New York. Mr. Hamilton responded; and his argument was one of unsurpassed power and eloquence. He vindicated his bill by showing that the State was under no obligations from the principles involved in the social compact—whatever they might be pleased to do from generosity or policy—to indemnify the citizens of New York for losses sustained by a violent dismemberment of a part of the body politic, which they did not possess the power to prevent or to reclaim. This speech, together with one which he delivered in favor of the cession of the five per centum imposts to the United States, were justly regarded as perfect models of senatorial argument and eloquence, were universally admired at the time by men of all parties, and contributed in no small degree to elevate his already exalted

fame. In the speech in reference to the impost he took a comprehensive view of the history and condition of the Union, and clearly demonstrated that there was no constitutional impediment to the passage of the bill; that there was not the slightest danger to be apprehended to the liberty of the people by intrusting the power in question to the United States; that the measure was highly advantageous in consequence of its influence on the revenue; and that our national affairs would soon be involved in ruin, if the chaos which then existed and pervaded every portion of them, to a greater or less extent, was permitted to continue. It was on this occasion that he made the following remarkable declaration: "If in the public stations I have filled I have acquitted myself with zeal, fidelity and disinterestedness; if in the private walks of life my conduct has been unstained by any dishonorable act; I have a right to the confidence of those to whom I address myself."\*

After the conclusion of his speech on the subject of the dispute with Vermont, the question was taken, and the bill recognizing the independence of that State, on the condition that she united with the

\* See a "Brief Review of the Public Life and Writings of General Hamilton" in the "Albany Sentinel," New York, Hopkins & Seymour, 1804.



confederacy, was passed. This happy result averted the horrors of a civil war, which at that crisis impended very closely over the respective States to the issue.

We have now arrived at that point, in the career of this remarkable man so full of intellectual resources, so patriotic, so indefatigable, so sagacious, so eloquent, and so profound, that his labors and his abilities seem to transcend, even in the most cautious judgment, those of any other statesman of ancient or modern times; when he performs his most important service to his country, and erects a monument to his own fame more honorable and more permanent than fell to the lot of any other American patriot, save Washington alone. We mean the formation and adoption of the Federal Constitution which now unites, governs, and protects this glorious Union with such prosperity and splendor. A few remarks in reference to the state and wants of the country, at that important period, will not be inappropriate as preliminary to a relation of Hamilton's agency in reference to the matter.

After the termination of the Revolutionary war, the States were governed by the Articles of Confederation or Union which had been formed under the influence and pressure of the common danger. The progress of time soon very clearly proved that they

furnished no solid foundation for the establishment and perpetuity of the government. The prevalence of peace and prosperity introduced many selfish and conflicting interests, the disposition and control of which were not provided for. A radical and thorough reform now became absolutely indispensable; and the wisest and ablest statesmen of the land readily acknowledged and felt this necessity. The original compact required the concurrence of seven States to the validity of every act of legislation, and of nine to some of the most important of them. The consequence was that frequently some of the States were not represented in some of the sessions of the general Congress; or were represented by one member only, or by an even number. The result of this was that in many cases these States had no voice in the passage of the laws, or their votes being equal were of no effect.

The existing bond of union was not only defective in its powers, but also in the means of executing them. All its acts were of none effect in the respective States unless approved by the legislatures of those States. The laws of Congress were dependent on the support and endorsement of the State laws in order to give them validity and effect. The general government was thus totally paralyzed. No sufficient fund could be provided to liquidate the

interest of the national debt. The consequence was that the public securities of the United States fell to one-tenth of their nominal value. The soldiers of the Revolution, who had bought with their toils and blood the liberties of the land, had received a certificate for the payment of their dues, which necessity often compelled them to sell, and for which they could obtain but an insignificant equivalent. The man of wealth who had made loans to the Continental government in the hour of its darkest necessity, was deprived not only of his interest, but even of a portion of his principal. An apology and excuse had been embraced for the non-fulfillment of the private contracts which had been formed, in consequence of this dereliction of the government. The results of all these evils were in the highest degree disastrous. Mutual confidence was in a great measure destroyed. The moral tone of the community was seriously deteriorated. Heavy restrictions were placed on American commerce. The intercourse with the British West Indies, from which the colonies had derived large supplies of gold and silver, was forbidden and cut off by the British government. Spain resisted their right to navigate the Mississippi river. Their safety in the Mediterranean sea was put in jeopardy. Being no longer protected by the power and awe of the British flag,

American ships were attacked in those and the adjacent waters by the Algerine pirates; and they were thus compelled to abandon a most lucrative trade, or else insure their cargoes at a most ruinous premium. Thus in reality many of the evils which ensued after the attainment of independence, were even greater than those which the British despot had inflicted previous to the outbreak of the Revolution. The people imagined that with the attainment of liberty they had secured boundless prosperity, that all their misfortunes and troubles were at an end; but they discovered that they had secured freedom without its appropriate concomitants, and the name of an independent nation without its influence, its position, and its attributes.

The operation of these pernicious causes led some to adopt violent unconstitutional and pernicious remedies. Riots and insurrections had occurred in Massachusetts; the arsenal was attacked, and a demand made of the legislature to reduce the taxes. Other outbursts in other directions took place, all of which, to discerning minds, were portents of greater evils yet to come. It became absolutely necessary to adopt some efficient remedy, if the prosperity of the country was to be rescued from the impending ruin. Accordingly James Madison, in the name of Virginia, made a proposition to all the

other States of the Confederation to meet in general convention, in order to digest a form of government equal and adapted to the growing exigencies of the colonies. The State of Virginia, immediately after the adjournment of the Convention at Annapolis, appointed seven commissioners to the general convention. New Jersey was the second to adopt the proposition; and on the 23d of November she selected commissioners with similar powers. Pennsylvania was the third, and appointed her representatives on the 30th of December, 1786. At first the State of New York was not disposed to co-operate. Some of her leading statesmen were misled by the selfish policy of Governor Clinton, who still wished to aggrandize the State at the expense of the federal government. Hamilton put forth his utmost efforts to counteract this pernicious and short-sighted policy. Congress then sat in the city of New York. He mixed daily with the members. He used every possible method of conciliation toward the national representatives and those of the legislature of the State. His house was their frequent resort; and by the charms of his eloquence, and by his unequalled powers of conversation, he endeavored to convince all men of the necessity and value of a more perfect and efficient union. He condemned those who asserted that it was unsafe to confer great fiscal

powers on Congress, because it was a body without checks, while at the same time they refused to alter and amend its constitution in such a manner as to render it both responsible and efficient. At length on the 8th of March, 1787, New York concurred, and appointed delegates to the Convention. These were Chief Justice Yates, Hamilton, and Lansing.\* On the 9th of April, Massachusetts appointed five deputies. At length, on the 25th of May, representatives from every State in the Union except Rhode Island met in Philadelphia. They chose General Washington as president. They deliberated with closed doors until the 17th of September, and during the interval they had adopted the new plan of national government now known and revered throughout the civilized world, as the "Constitution of the United States of America." This constitution was signed by Washington as president of the Convention, and was approved by him. Copies of it were sent to the legislatures of the different States for their approval. It was submitted by the several legislatures to Conventions appointed in each State by the people. And it was at length, after thorough and mature deliberation, adopted and approved by every one of the then existing States.

\* See Senate Journal of New York, February 28th, 1787.



The agency of Hamilton in this celebrated Convention was of the first prominence and importance. The details of his activity were not then known, inasmuch as the deliberations were held with closed doors. Yet the nature and value of his labors we may now readily estimate from facts that have since become known.\* That Convention, to whose hands was committed the creation of that sublime and omnific instrument which was destined to mould the character and future career of this vast confederacy, which even now in half a century rivals in magnitude, in power, and in glory, the empires of Augustus or Charlemagne, were duly impressed with the importance of the functions confided to their hands; and yet they intrusted to Hamilton, still a young man of thirty years, the most responsible and difficult portions of their duty. A committee was first appointed to frame the standing rules of the Convention. Wythe of Virginia, Pinckney of South Carolina, and Hamilton, were appointed the members of that committee. They reported, and their report, with some unimportant amendments, was adopted. On the 29th of May, fifteen proposi-

\* The Journal of the Debates of the Federal Convention was published by order of Congress, March 27th, 1818. It is an incident here worthy of note, that Mr. Madison survived all the other members of that Convention.

tions suggesting the establishment of a national government were laid before the Convention by Edmund Randolph of Virginia. The Convention resolved itself into a committee of the whole to discuss these propositions. Different members then addressed the committee at length. Charles Pinckney was the first. Hamilton, in his argument, contended that a national government ought to be established consisting of a supreme legislative, judicial, and executive branches; and that the right of suffrage in the National Legislature ought to be apportioned to the number of free inhabitants and not to the quotas of contribution. The discussions in the Convention were protracted and deliberate. An important theme of debate which arose, was, whether the Convention should recommend the establishment of a national government, or whether it should propose mere articles of confederation. Hamilton contended, as might have been expected, for the former. In fact two parties existed in the Convention, at the head of one of which was Hamilton, the federalist, and at the head of the other was Madison, the radical or democrat. Hamilton contended that the National Legislature should have the power to negative all the laws of the States which to them appeared improper. He thought that this power

would create a mutual dependence between the general and state authorities.

Neither of the parties seemed able to harmonize on the plans already proposed. It appeared as if their deliberations would eventually prove futile and productive of no result. During the sessions of the Convention, and while the discussion of Mr. Randolph's propositions was progressing, Hamilton had been busily preparing a plan of government in which, while he closely adhered to the great principles which should lie at the basis of a republic, endeavored to impart to it the permanency, vigor and efficiency which characterize a constitutional and limited monarchy. On the 18th of June he addressed the committee of the whole at length; and proposed the chief ideas of the system which he intended to submit. This celebrated speech, of which the systematic and logical skeleton still remains among his papers,\* was pronounced by Gouverneur Morris to have been the most able and impressive he had ever heard; and during its delivery he read the elaborate plan of government which he had prepared; a plan so fully and perfectly matured by his sagacious and powerful mind, that it might have gone into immediate effect the very day of its

\* See Life of Hamilton, by J. C. Hamilton, Vol. II. p. 481

adoption. It consisted of ten articles, each article being subdivided into sections.

The first article declared that the supreme legislative power ought to be vested in an assembly and senate, subject to a negative; that the supreme executive power should be intrusted to a president; and the supreme judicial authority vested in a court consisting of not less than six nor more than twelve justices.

The second article proposed that the representatives should be chosen by the free male citizens of the several States of the Union, all of whom of the age of twenty-one years and upward should be entitled to an equal vote.

The third article related to the second branch of the legislature, or senate. The fourth article had reference to the chief executive, the mode of his election, his prerogatives, and his duties. The fifth article discussed the office of the chief justice, of the other justices, of the trial by jury. The various other articles which followed were intended to meet the different exigencies in national history which might occur; the establishment of the army, the protection of property, the execution and fulfillment of treaties, the creation of new States, and the common rights and immunities which, in every part of the confederacy, should forever be the possession

of every American citizen. The tenth article finally provided that the new constitution should be submitted to Conventions of the people of each State, consisting of deputies chosen by their respective legislatures. When the constitution had thus been fully and finally ratified, Congress were to give notice of a time and place of meeting of the senators and representatives from all the States; a majority of whom when assembled should, by a plurality of votes in joint ballot, elect a president of the United States; and the government thus organized under the new constitution should commence its operation.

Such was the plan devised by the sagacious and profound intellect of Hamilton. The great principle which lay at the foundation of his system was that, in order to render the confederacy powerful, prosperous, and enduring, the national government ought to have sufficient authority and vigor delegated to it by the State government, to enable it to support itself without the aid or interference of the State governments. He contended that the first branch of the national legislature should be elected directly by the people, and not by the State legislatures; because the period might arrive when the State legislatures would cease to exist. As to the second branch, the senate, he asserted that they should be chosen by the people through the agency of

electors. He held and repeatedly uttered the great doctrine, that true liberty was to be found neither in despotism, nor in the extremes of democracy, but in moderate governments alone; for too much democracy leads to popular despotism.

The views of Jefferson, the illustrious father of American democracy, in reference to the federal Constitution, may be ascertained from the following extracts from his letters; and are interesting in this connection.

“This Convention met at Philadelphia. It sat with closed doors, and kept all its proceedings secret until its dissolution on the 17th of September, when the results of its labors were published all together. I received a copy early in November, and *read and contemplated its provisions with great satisfaction*. As not a member of the Convention, however, nor probably a single citizen of the Union had approved it in all its parts, so I too found articles which I thought objectionable. The absence of express declarations insuring freedom of religion, freedom of the press, freedom of the person, under the uninterrupted protection of the *habeas corpus*, and trial by jury in civil as well as in criminal cases, excited my jealousy; and the re-eligibility of the president for life I quite disapproved. I expressed freely, in letters to my friends, and more particularly to Mr. Madi-



son and General Washington, my approbations and objections. How the good should be secured, and the ill brought to rights, was the difficulty. To refer it back to a new Convention might endanger the loss of the whole. My first idea was, that the nine States first acting should accept it unconditionally, and thus secure what in it was good; and that the four last should accept on the previous condition that certain amendments should be agreed to; but a better course was devised of accepting the whole, and trusting that the good sense and honest intentions of our citizens would make the alterations which should be deemed necessary. Accordingly all accepted, six without objection, and seven with recommendations of specified amendments. Those respecting the press, religion, and juries, with several others of great value, were accordingly made; but the *habeas corpus* was left to the discretion of Congress, and the amendment against the re-eligibility of the president was not proposed. My fears of that feature were founded on the importance of the office, on the fierce contentions it might excite among ourselves, if continuable for life, and the dangers of interference, either with money or arms, by foreign nations, to whom the choice of an American president might become interesting. Examples of this abounded in history; in the case of the

Roman emperors, for instance—of the popes, while of any significance—of the German emperors, the kings of Poland, and the deys of Barbary. I had observed, too, in the feudal history, and in the recent instance particularly of the Stadtholder of Holland, how easily offices or tenures for life *slide into* inheritances. My wish therefore was, that the president should be elected for *seven years*, and be ineligible afterward. This term I thought sufficient to enable him, with the concurrence of the legislature, to carry through and establish any system of improvement he should propose for the general good. But the practice adopted, I think, is better—allowing his continuance for eight years, with a liability to be dropped at half-way of the term, making that a period of probation. That this continuance should be restrained to seven years was the opinion of the Convention at an earlier stage of its session, when it voted that term by a majority of eight against two, and by a simple majority that he should be ineligible a *second time*. This opinion was confirmed by the House so late as July 26th, referred to the committee of detail, reported favorably by them, and changed to the present form by final vote, on the last day but one only of their session. Of this change, three States expressed their disapprobation—New York, by recommending an amendment that

the president should not be eligible a third time, and Virginia and North Carolina that he should not be capable of serving more than eight in any term of sixteen years; and although this amendment has not been made in form, yet practice seems to have established it. The example of four presidents voluntarily retiring at the end of their eighth year, and the progress of public opinion that the principle is salutary, have given it in practice the force of precedent and usage; insomuch, that should a president consent to be a candidate for a *third* election, I trust he would be rejected, on this demonstration of ambitious views.

“But there was another amendment, of which none of us thought at the time, and in the omission of which lurks the germ that is to destroy this happy combination of national powers in the general government for matters of *national concern*, and independent powers in the States for what concerns the States severally. In England it was a great point gained at the Revolution that the commissions of the judges, which had hitherto been during pleasure, should thenceforth be made during good behavior. A judiciary dependent on the will of the king, had proved itself the most oppressive of all tools in the hands of that magistrate. Nothing then could be more salutary than a change there to the

tenure of good behavior; and the question of good behavior left to the vote of a simple majority in the two houses of Parliament. Before the Revolution, we were all good English whigs, cordial in their free principles and in their jealousies of their executive magistrate. These jealousies are very apparent in all our State constitutions; and in the general government, in this instance, we have gone even beyond the English caution, by requiring a vote of two-thirds, in one of the houses, for removing a judge; a vote so impossible, where any defense is made, before men of ordinary prejudices and passions, that our judges are effectually independent of the nation. *Bnt this ought not to be.* I would not, indeed, make them dependent on the executive authority, as they formerly were in England; but I deem it indispensable to the continuance of this government, that they should be submitted to some practical and impartial control; and that this, to be impartial, must be compounded of a mixture of State and Federal authorities. It is not enough that honest men are appointed judges. All know the influence of interest on the mind of man, and how unconsciously his judgment is warped by that influence. To this bias add that of the *esprit du corps*, of their peculiar maxim and creed that 'it is the office of a good judge to enlarge his jurisdiction,'

and the absence of responsibility; and how can we expect impartial decision between the general government, of which they are themselves so eminent a part, and an individual State, from which they have nothing to hope or fear? We have seen, too, that contrary to all correct example, they are in the habit of going out of the question before them, to throw an anchor ahead, and grapple further hold for future advances of power. They are then, in fact, the corps of *sappers* and *miners*, steadily working to *undermine the independent rights of the States*, and to consolidate all power in the hands of that government in which they have so important a freehold estate."

In a letter to F. Hopkinson, dated Paris, March 13th, 1789, he avows himself an advocate of a consolidated government, and disclaims the suspicion of being an anti-federalist. "You say that I have been dished up to you as an anti-federalist, and ask me if it be just. My opinion was never worthy enough of notice, to merit citing; but since you ask it, I will tell it to you. I am not a federalist, because I never submitted the whole system of my opinions to the creed of any party of men whatever, in religion, in philosophy, in politics, or in any thing else, where I was capable of thinking for myself. Such an addiction is the last degradation of



a free and moral agent. If I could not go to heaven but with a party, I would not go there at all. Therefore I protest to you, I am not of the party of federalists. But I am *much farther from that of the anti-federalists*. I approved from the first of the great mass of what is in the new constitution; the consolidation of the government; the organization into executive, legislative, and judiciary; the subdivision of the legislative; the happy compromise of interests between the great and little States, by the different manner of voting in the different houses; the voting by persons instead of States; the qualified negative on laws given to the executive, which, however, I should have liked better, if associated with the judiciary also, as in New York; and the power of taxation. I thought at first that the latter might have been limited. A little reflection soon convinced me it ought not to be. What I disapproved from the first moment, also, was the want of a Bill of Rights, to guard liberty against the legislative as well as executive branches of the government; that is to say, to secure freedom in religion, freedom of the press, freedom from monopolies, freedom from unlawful imprisonment, freedom from a permanent military, and a trial by jury, in all cases determinable by the laws of the land. I disapproved also the *perpetual re-eligibility*



*of the president.* To these points of disapprobation I adhere. My first wish was, that the nine first Conventions might accept the constitution, as the means of securing to us the great mass of good it contained, and that the four last might reject it, as the means of obtaining amendments. But I was corrected in this wish the moment I saw the much better plan of Massachusetts, and which had never occurred to me. With respect to the declaration of rights, I suppose the majority of the United States are of my opinion: for I apprehend all the anti-federalists, and a very respectable portion of the federalists, think that such a declaration should now be annexed. The enlightened part of Europe have given us the greatest credit for inventing this *instrument of security for the rights of the people*, and have been not a little surprised to see us so soon give it up. With respect to the re-eligibility of the president, I find myself differing from the majority of my countrymen; for I think there are but three States of the eleven which have desired an alteration of this. And, indeed, since the thing is established, *I would wish it not to be altered during the life of our great leader, whose executive talents are superior to those, I believe, of any man in the world, and who alone, by the authority of his name and the confidence reposed in his perfect integrity, is*

*fully qualified to put the new government so under way, as to secure it against the efforts of opposition. But having derived from our error all the good there was in it, I hope we shall correct it the moment we can no longer have the same name at the helm."*

The views of Hamilton gradually gained favor with the most able and enlightened members of the Convention. Judge Read, a delegate from Delaware, remarked: "I would have no objection if the government was more national. The plan of the gentleman from New York is certainly the best. But the great evil is the unjust appropriation of the public lands. If there was but one national government, we would be all equally interested."

It is unnecessary for us to narrate in these pages the details of the deliberations which took place in this memorable Convention. While that body was still in session, a mysterious report was promulgated in New York, by the enemies of a National Confederacy, to the effect that the Convention intended to establish a monarchy, and to place at its head the Prince Bishop of Osnaburgh.\* This

\* The "Bishop of Osnaburgh" was the titular dignity which belonged to one of the princes of the royal family of England. It was derived from Osnaburgh, a city of Hanover, and was one of the appendages of the dynasty of the reigning house of Hanover. At

absurd report, in the existing state of public excitement and apprehension, was not without its weight. This circumstance increased Hamilton's anxiety for the establishment of an energetic national government. He continued to take an active participation in all the debates; and hence Dr. William Samuel Johnson, a delegate from Connecticut, very truly observed, that if "the Constitution did not succeed on trial, Mr. Hamilton was less responsible for that result than any other member, for he fully and frankly pointed out to the Convention what he apprehended were the infirmities to which it was liable. And that if it answered the fond expectations of the public, the community would be more indebted to Mr. Hamilton than to any other member; for after its essential outlines were agreed to, he labored most indefatigably to heal those infirmities, and to guard against the evils to which they might expose it."

When the Convention at last came to vote on the adoption of the Constitution which had been proposed and discussed, a few members opposed it, and refused to append their signatures. Among

the time of the Revolution this title and dignity belonged to Prince William Henry, Duke of Clarence. Hence the proposition stated to have been made in the Convention, was nothing less than the re-establishment of British rule in the colonies, in the person of one of the princes of the blood.

these were the deputies from the State of New York; and accordingly the name of Hamilton appears alone subscribed to it. Three others also refused to sign it. These were Gerry, Mason, and Randolph.

The federal Constitution, as finally adopted and recommended by the Convention, eventually secured the approbation of all the States, and went into operation on the first Wednesday in March, 1789.\* Twelve additional articles were afterward adopted, at different periods, as soon as they were rendered necessary by the exigencies of the nation. Although some considerable changes were introduced into the first draft, as submitted by Hamilton, yet it may with justice be said, that the present Constitution of the United States, the most perfect piece of political machinery which the world has ever seen; beautiful, complete, harmonious, and efficient, as the experience of more than half a century has proved it to be; was the production of the masterly mind of Hamilton, and proceeded from his hand, like Minerva from the brain of Jove, a form of matchless beauty and perfection. With great truth has the profound statesman Guizot declared, in his able work on the character of Washington, that "Hamilton must be classed among the men who

\* See 5 Wheaton's Reports, p. 420.

have best known the vital principles and fundamental conditions of a government; not of a government such as this, but of a government worthy of its mission and of its name. There is not in the Constitution of the United States an element of order, of force, or of duration, which he has not powerfully contributed to introduce into it and to give it a predominance."

After the publication of the Constitution, and while the people were discussing its merits throughout the whole nation, complaints were made against Mr. Hamilton to the effect that he had proposed measures to the Convention which were in substance monarchical. This absurd charge drew forth a voluntary vindication from the celebrated Luther Martin, who, in a publication, declared "that Hamilton, in a most able and eloquent address, did express his general ideas upon the subject of government, and of that government which would, in all human probability, be most advantageous for the United States I admit; but in thus expressing his sentiments he did not suggest a wish that any one officer of the government should derive his power from any other source than the people; that there should be in any instance an hereditary succession to office; nor that any person should continue longer than during good behavior." During the period that the Con-



stitution was under popular scrutiny, and in order to counteract the absurd prejudices which not a few designing demagogues were active in disseminating both publicly and secretly among the people, the celebrated series of essays entitled the *Federalist* was written. Its authors were Hamilton, Madison, and Jay; but the largest and most valuable portion of the work was composed by Mr. Hamilton. This is one of the most able and profound productions of any land or age, and deserves to take a permanent and undisputed place by the side of the great works of Burlamaqui, Grotius, and Montesquieu, in the science of Political Philosophy.

But in order to oppose more directly the tide of popular prejudice and ignorance against the new Constitution, Hamilton published another essay, in which he holds the following language: "The new Constitution has, in favor of its success, these circumstances: A very great weight of influence of the persons who framed it, particularly in the universal popularity of General Washington. The good-will of the commercial interest throughout the States, which will give all its efforts to the establishment of a government capable of regulating, protecting, and extending the commerce of the Union. The good-will of most men of property in the several States, who wish a government of



the Union able to protect them against domestic violence and the depredations which the democratic spirit is apt to make on property, and who are besides anxious for the respectability of the nation. The hopes of the creditors of the United States that a general government, possessing the means of doing it, will pay the debt of the Union. A strong belief of the people at large of the insufficiency of the present confederation to preserve the existence of the Union, and of the necessity of the Union to their safety and prosperity; of course, a strong desire of a change, and a predisposition to receive well the propositions of the Convention."

He also predicted that if the Constitution were adopted, Washington would be elected the first President; that that event would insure a wise and prudent administration; that such an administration would secure the confidence and affection of the whole nation; and that thus the central government would acquire more consistency and power than by the letter of the Constitution it was entitled to receive.

In the end, the predictions of this great man and profound statesman were fully realized. The Constitution, which he chiefly elaborated, was finally adopted; and has since become the subject of the constant eulogy of myriads of eloquent tongues,

and has received the admiration of the whole civilized world. The merit of Hamilton in connection with it can now scarcely be estimated; but when a thousand years of unequaled national prosperity and glory shall have rolled over this confederacy, which his great plastic hand moulded into so compact, so beautiful, and so consistent a mass; when five hundred millions of beings shall inhabit this continent, turning by their thrifty industry all her boundless plains and valleys into blooming and fruitful gardens; and when, from the Atlantic to the Pacific shore an empire of freemen shall here live and reign under the benign control of that Constitution, being ten times greater than any previous empire that ever existed on the earth; then, indeed, may the vast services and the venerable name of Alexander Hamilton be cherished with the profound reverence and the high appreciation which they abundantly deserve.\*

In the summer of 1788 the Convention of the State

\* The following observation states clearly and beautifully one of the chief attributes or characteristics of this celebrated work:

“CONSTITUTION OF THE UNITED STATES.—Like one of those wondrous rocking stones reared by the Druids, which the finger of a child may vibrate to the centre, yet the might of an army could not move it from its place, our Constitution is so nicely poised and balanced, that it seems to sway with every breath of opinion, yet so firmly rooted in the heart and affections of the people, that the wildest storms of treason and fanaticism break over it in vain.”—

*B. C. Winthrop.*

of New York met, of which Hamilton was a member. During the six weeks of its continuance he was actively employed in using his influence to induce that great State to adopt the federal Constitution, and unite with the confederacy. To his exertions it is mainly due that New York became a member of this great family of nations. His speeches before this Convention set forth, with great power and eloquence, the same doctrines which are defended in the *Federalist*. The most remarkable are those in which he vindicated the constitutional stability and permanency of the United States Senate; and clearly proved that the organization of that branch of the government ought to possess sufficient power to correct the prejudices, to control the passions, and to resist the fluctuations of the popular branch of the government.\*

\* See Works of Alexander Hamilton, by J. C. Hamilton, 7 vols. 8vo. Vol. II. p. 467.

## CHAPTER X.

THE FIRST ELECTION OF FEDERAL OFFICERS—RELUCTANCE OF WASHINGTON TO ACCEPT THE PRESIDENCY—HIS LETTERS ON THE SUBJECT—WASHINGTON IS ELECTED PRESIDENT—STATE OF PARTIES IN THE UNITED STATES AT THAT TIME—SELECTION OF WASHINGTON'S CABINET—HAMILTON CHOSEN SECRETARY OF THE TREASURY—HIS FIRST REPORT ON PUBLIC CREDIT—HIS REPORT ON THE REVENUES—ORIGIN OF THE ANIMOSITY BETWEEN HAMILTON AND JEFFERSON—HAMILTON'S REPORT ON A NATIONAL BANK—CONTROVERSY RESPECTING STATE POWER AND FEDERAL RIGHTS—FIERCE CONFLICTS IN WASHINGTON'S CABINET—HIS ATTEMPT TO HARMONIZE ITS MEMBERS.

AFTER the adoption of the federal Constitution, the next step in the progress of the government, in 1789, was the election of federal officers. The unanimous voice of a grateful nation loudly invited Washington to occupy the highest seat within their gift. He alone possessed the full and absolute confidence of the whole people, as yet distrustful and suspicious of the rival claims and interests of sections; and it was believed that he alone possessed the intelligence, patriotism, firmness, knowledge of the wants of the whole confederacy, and the experience which the crisis demanded.

Nothing but a high sense of public duty induced

the Father of his country to accept the proffered elevation. He was then fifty-seven years of age. He had borne the innumerable labors and trials of the revolutionary struggle, and had now retired to the shades of private life, to enjoy the tranquillity and repose which he so much needed; yet, ever true to the behests of a lofty and unselfish patriotism, he was willing to make any sacrifice which his country might demand of him. On the 30th of April, 1789, he took the oath of office, and entered on the performance of his duties. Profound wisdom and prudence characterized all his acts from the moment of his entrance into office. To one of those who, previous to his inauguration, had requested an appointment under government, he replied in the following impressive language:

“Should it become absolutely necessary for me to occupy the station in which your letter presupposes me, I have determined to go into it perfectly free from all engagements, of every nature whatsoever.

“If I declined the task it would be upon quite another principle. Notwithstanding my advanced season of life, my increasing fondness for agricultural amusements, and my growing love of retirement augment and confirm my decided predilection for the character of a private citizen, yet it will be no one of these motives, nor the hazard to

which my former reputation might be exposed, or the terror of encountering new fatigues and troubles, that would deter me from an acceptance; but, that a belief that some other person, who had less pretense and less inclination to be excused, could execute all the duties full as satisfactorily as myself. To say more would be indiscreet, as a disclosure of a refusal beforehand might incur the application of the fable in which the fox is represented as undervaluing the grapes he could not reach. You will perceive, my dear sir, by what is here observed (and which you will be pleased to consider in the light of a confidential communication) that my inclinations will dispose and decide me to remain as I am, unless a clear and insurmountable conviction should be impressed on my mind that some very disagreeable consequences must, in all human probability, result from the indulgence of my wishes."

In answer to a letter from General Lincoln, on the same subject, he thus expressed himself, in language so earnest and with feeling so intense, as to leave no room for suspicion that he sincerely desired to escape further honors, and repose amid the tranquil shades of his estate. "I would willingly pass over in silence that part of your letter in which you mention the persons who are candidates for the two first offices in the executive, if I did not fear



the omission might seem to betray a want of confidence. Motives of delicacy have prevented me hitherto from conversing, or writing on this subject, whenever I could avoid it with decency. I may, however, with great sincerity, and I believe without offending against modesty, or propriety, *say to you*, that I most heartily wish the choice to which you allude might not fall upon me; and that if it should, I must reserve to myself the right of making up my final decision, at the last moment, when it can be brought into one view, and when the expediency or in expediency of a refusal can be more judiciously determined than at present. But be assured, my dear sir, if from any inducement I shall be persuaded ultimately to accept, it will not be (so far as I know my own heart) from any of a private or personal nature. Every personal consideration conspires to rivet me (if I may use the expression) to retirement. At my time of life, and under my circumstances, nothing in this world can ever draw me from it, unless it be a *conviction* that the partiality of my countrymen had made my services absolutely necessary, joined to a *fear* that my refusal might induce a belief that I preferred the conservation of my own reputation and private ease to the good of my country. After all, if I should conceive myself in a manner *constrained to accept*, I call heaven to

witness that this very act would be the greatest sacrifice of my personal feelings and wishes that ever I have been called upon to make. It would be to forego repose and domestic enjoyment for trouble, perhaps for public obloquy: for, I should consider myself as entering upon an unexplored field, enveloped on every side with clouds and darkness.

“From this embarrassing situation I had naturally supposed that my declarations at the close of the war would have saved me; and that my sincere intentions, then publicly made known, would have effectually precluded me forever afterward from being looked upon as a candidate for any office. This hope, as a last anchor of worldly happiness in old age, I had still carefully preserved, until the public papers, and private letters from my correspondents, in almost every quarter, taught me to apprehend that I might soon be obliged to answer the question, whether I would go again into public life or not.”

In his answer to a letter from Lafayette, pressing him on the same point, he repeats the same sentiments with this addition: “Nothing short of a conviction of duty will induce me again to take an active part in public affairs. And, in that case, if I can form a plan for my own conduct, my endeavors shall be unremittingly exerted (even at the

hazard of former fame or present popularity) to extricate my country from the embarrassments in which it is entangled through want of credit, and to establish a general system of policy which, if pursued, will insure permanent felicity to the commonwealth. I think I see a path, as clear and as direct as a ray of light, which leads to the attainment of that object. Nothing but harmony, honesty, industry, and frugality are necessary to make us a great and happy people. Happily, the present posture of affairs, and the prevailing disposition of my countrymen, promise to co-operate in establishing those four great and essential pillars of public felicity."

At length the election for electors of President and Vice-President, under the new Constitution, took place; and on the 6th of April, 1789, the votes were opened and counted in the Senate; when it appeared that George Washington was *unanimously* elected President of the United States by the people, and John Adams chosen Vice-President, to serve for four years from the 4th of March, 1789.

When we consider the existing animosity of parties, the great proportion of the people who were already arrayed under the banners of the anti-federalists, and the violent efforts which were made to impede the first operations of the new Constitution, it will

excite some surprise, that even the great popular weight of Washington's character should have frowned down all opposition to him; and that the people of so immense and diversified a region of country should have united, without a dissenting voice among the electors, in conferring upon him the supreme executive power of the Union.

As affording some evidence of the reluctance with which he consented to assume this new dignity, and as illustrative of that modesty and diffidence which were natural to his great mind, we quote an extract from one of his letters to General Knox, upon the subject of his elevation to office. "I feel for those members of the new Congress who, hitherto, have given an unavailing attendance at the theatre of action. For myself, the delay may be compared to a reprieve; for, in confidence, I tell *you* (with the *world* it would obtain *little credit*) that my movements to the chair of government will be accompanied by feelings not unlike those of a culprit who is going to the place of his execution; so unwilling am I, in the evening of life, nearly consumed in public cares, to quit a peaceful abode for an ocean of difficulties, *without that competency of political skill, abilities, and inclinations*, which are necessary to manage the helm. I am sensible that I am embarking the voice of the people, and a good

name of my own on this voyage; but what returns will be made for them, Heaven alone can foretell. Integrity and firmness are all I can promise. These, be the voyage long or short, shall never forsake me, although I may be deserted by all men; for, of the consolations which are to be derived from these, under any circumstances, the world cannot deprive me."

His election was announced to him at Mount Vernon, on the 14th of April, 1789, by Charles Thompson, Secretary of the late Congress; and two days afterward he set out to assume the duties of government, accompanied by Mr. Thompson and Colonel Humphreys. In his diary he has thus described his feelings upon this eventful occasion: "About ten o'clock, I bade adieu to Mount Vernon, to private life, and to domestic felicity, and, *with a mind oppressed with more anxious and painful sensations than I have words to express, set out for New York in company with Mr. Thompson and Colonel Humphreys*, with the best dispositions to render service to my country, in obedience to its call, *but with less hope of answering its expectations.*"

We have already adverted to the two great parties into which the country was divided; one in favor of the *sovereignty of the States*, and the other inclining to invest the *federal government* with powers so



absolute and unlimited, as to make the Union paramount, and reduce the States to entire subserviency to the Union; one being in favor of the nation—the other giving the preference to a cluster of independent republics. Hence a wide contrariety of opinion necessarily prevailed as to the measures to be adopted to *secure union without endangering liberty*.

Many of the officers of the army had been elected to the Congress of 1783, and these formed the head of that party which inclined to invest supreme power in the federal government.'

At the head of this party, for such it indubitably was, stood Washington and Hamilton, both unsurpassed in genius and talent—unrivalled in purity and patriotism.

We have alluded to the manner in which the military attitude of Washington and his contact with the civil power had gradually invited him into speculations on government peculiar to the practical statesman; and that sad experience of the evils of a relaxed system of polity had deeply imbued his mind in favor of that *high-toned* authority which approves of martial discipline and vigor. In accordance with these ideas, prompted by his extreme solicitude for the good of his country, he addressed, on the 8th of June, 1783, a circular letter to the governors of the several States respectively, from



which we introduce the following extracts. Speaking of the option of government left to the United States, he says: "This is the time of their political probation; this is the moment when the eyes of the whole world are turned upon them; this is the moment to establish or ruin their national character forever; this is the favorable moment to give such a tone to our federal government as will enable it to answer the ends of its institution, or this may be the ill-fated moment for relaxing the powers of the Union, annihilating the cement of the confederation and exposing us to become the sport of European politics, which may play one State against another to prevent their growing importance, and to serve their own interested purposes. For, according to the system of policy the States shall adopt at this moment, they will stand or fall; and by their confirmation or lapse, it is yet to be decided whether the Revolution must ultimately be considered as a blessing or a curse—a blessing or a curse, not to the present age alone, for with our fate will the destiny of unborn millions be involved.

"There are four things which I humbly conceive are essential to the well-being, I may even venture to say to the existence of the United States as an independent power.

“1st. An *indissoluble* Union of the States under one *federal head*. .

“2d. A sacred regard to public justice.

“3d. The adoption of a proper peace establishment; and

“4th. *The prevalence of that pacific and friendly disposition among the people of the United States, which will induce them to forget their local prejudices and politics, to make those mutual concessions which are requisite to the general prosperity, and in some instances to sacrifice their individual advantages to the interest of the community.*

“These are the pillars on which the glorious fabric of our independency and national character must be supported. *Liberty is the basis*, and whoever would dare to sap the foundation, or overturn the structure, under whatever specious pretext he may attempt it, will merit the bitterest execration, and the severest punishment which can be inflicted by his injured country.”

Such sentiments as these not only ennoble and dignify, but immortalize their author; and whatever prejudices he may have cherished in favor of a vigorous authority in the Union, they were more than atoned for by the purity of his patriotism, and by the exalted honesty of his purposes.

Again in the same letter, breathing nothing but

the loftiest patriotism, he says: "It is only in our *united character* that we are known as an empire, that our independence is acknowledged, that our power can be regarded, or our credit supported among foreign nations. The treaties of the European powers with the United States of America will have no validity on a dissolution of the Union. We shall be left nearly in a state of nature, or we may find, by our own unhappy experience, that there is a natural and necessary progression from the extreme of anarchy to the extreme of tyranny, and that arbitrary power is most easily established on the ruins of liberty abused to licentiousness."

Other and stronger letters from his friends in different sections of the Union pressed him upon the same point; and among other reasons urged by his friend Colonel Lee, was the apprehension that the rally of the enemies of the Constitution, which was made in the several States in opposition to the new Constitution, would certainly prove but too successful were any other less popular character placed in the presidential chair.

In his reply to the letter of Colonel Lee, General Washington remarks: "Your observations, on the solemnity of the crisis and its application to myself, bring before me subjects of the most momentous and interesting nature. In our endeavors to estab-

lish a new general government, the contest, nationally considered, seems not to have been so much for glory as existence. It was for a long time doubtful whether we were to survive as an independent republic, or decline from our federal dignity into insignificant and wretched fragments of empire. The adoption of the Constitution so extensively, and with so liberal an acquiescence on the part of the minorities in general, promised the former; but lately the circular letter of New York has manifested, in my apprehension, an unfavorable, if not an insidious tendency to a contrary policy. I still hope for the best; but before you mentioned it, I could not help fearing it would serve as a standard to which the disaffected might resort. It is now evidently the part of all honest men, who are friends to the new Constitution, to endeavor to give it a chance to disclose its merits and defects, by carrying it fairly into effect in the first instance."

The oath of office was administered to the President by Mr. Livingston, Chancellor of the State of New York, in that city, in presence of an immense concourse of people. John Adams of Massachusetts, had been chosen Vice-President. Immediately retiring to the senate chamber, Washington addressed both Houses in an impressive and appropriate speech. He renounced all pecuniary com

compensation for his services, as he had done as commander-in-chief of the Continental army, charging the government only for his actual expenses. He stated briefly the principles which should guide him in the administration of public affairs, and commended the interests of his country to the blessing of Heaven.

The responses of the several Houses were appropriate, and in part as follows :

In their answer to his speech the Senate say: "The unanimous suffrage of the elective body in your favor is peculiarly expressive of the gratitude, confidence, and affection of the citizens of America, and is the highest testimonial at once of your merit and their esteem. We are sensible, sir, that nothing but the voice of your fellow-citizens could have called you from a retreat chosen with the fondest predilection, endeared by habit, and consecrated to the repose of declining years. We rejoice, and with us all America, that in obedience to the call of our common country you have returned once more to public life. In you all parties confide; in you all interests unite; and we have no doubt that your past services, great as they have been, will be equaled by your future exertions; and that your prudence and sagacity as a statesman will tend to avert the dangers to which we were exposed, to give stability

to the present government, and dignity and splendor to that country which your skill and valor as a soldier so eminently contributed to raise to independence and to empire."

The answer of the House of Representatives glowed with equal affection for the person and character of the President.

"The representatives of the people of the United States," says this address, "present their congratulations on the event by which your fellow-citizens have attested the pre-eminence of your merit. You have long held the first place in their esteem. You have often received tokens of their affection. You now possess the only proof that remained of their gratitude for your services, of their reverence for your wisdom, and of their confidence in your virtues. You enjoy the highest because the truest honor, of being the first magistrate by the unanimous choice of the freest people on the face of the earth."

The government being thus inaugurated, Washington proceeded to nominate the officers of his cabinet. From his letter already quoted it may justly be inferred that his selections were made freely, deliberately, and with a regard only to the merits of the candidates and their ability to promote the public welfare.



Thomas Jefferson was placed at the head of the department of Foreign Affairs, now denominated the Department of State. Colonel Hamilton was appointed Secretary of the Treasury. General Knox was made Secretary of War. Edmund Randolph was chosen Attorney-General. John Rutledge, John Wilson, William Cushing, Robert Harrison, and John Blair were designated as Justices of the Supreme Court of the United States. John Jay was selected to fill the high post of Chief Justice.

In the peculiar circumstances of financial want and derangement in which the nation was then placed, the most important post in the cabinet was that assigned by the impartial and discerning choice of Washington to Mr. Hamilton, then aged thirty-two years. On him devolved the ponderous task of restoring public credit, of introducing order and arrangement into that vast mass of chaos in which the finances of the nation had been thrown by the struggles and losses of the Revolution, and its succeeding jealousies and strifes. He was expected to devise means to obtain a revenue at once ample and secure; and yet to secure it without imposing serious burdens on the people, and without exciting hostility and jealousy against the new government in any portion of the antagonistic States. A more

herculean and difficult undertaking than this could not possibly be imagined or imposed.

Hamilton entered upon the performance of his new duties with his usual industry, sagacity, and success. On the 21st of September, 1789, Congress passed a resolution to the effect that the Secretary of the Treasury should submit a report containing a plan for the support of the public credit. In this able report he held, that it was agreed by all parties that the foreign debt should be provided for according to the precise terms of the contract; and it was to be regretted that, in reference to the domestic debt, the same unanimity of sentiment did not prevail.

He discussed at length the disputed point, whether a discrimination ought to be made between original holders of the public securities and the present possessors by purchase. He contended that no such discrimination should be made. He next proceeded to the inquiry whether any difference ought to be made between the creditors of the Union and those of the separate States; and held that no such difference should exist. He asserted that "both descriptions of debt were contracted for the same objects, and were in the main the same."\*

\* See Works of Alexander Hamilton, by his Son. Vol. II. p. 200, *et seq.*

Equity required the same measure of retribution for all. He declared that many potent reasons existed why the State debts contracted for such objects should be assumed by the federal government. He proceeded into an elaborate discussion of all the points of his subject; and proposed as a remedy for the existing debts that a loan should be opened to the full amount of the liabilities, both those of the States and of the general government. To enable the national treasury to support the increased demand which was thus made upon it, he proposed an increase of the duties on imported wines, spirits, tea, and coffee, as well as a duty on home-made spirits.

This report of Hamilton's is justly regarded as one of his ablest efforts. It called forth at the time the most extravagant praise and the most bitter censure. And it especially deserves attention inasmuch as the opposition which was directed against its adoption, constitutes the foundation of the first systematic resistance to the principles on which the government was then administered. On the 8th of February, Mr. Fitzsimmons proposed several resolutions in support of the principles asserted in the report. The first of these referred to a provision for the foreign debt, and was adopted by the House unanimously. The second was in favor of appro

priating permanent funds for the payment of the interest of the domestic debt, and for the gradual redemption of the principal. This resolution called forth the most determined opposition. It was asserted that the United States were not under obligation to pay their domestic creditors the sums specified in their certificates of debt; because the original holders had parted with them for two shillings, sixpence in the pound. It was proposed by others, that the federal government should pay the present holders of assignable paper the highest price it had borne in the market, and to give the balance to the original holder. This proposition, after a long debate, was rejected by a large majority.

The report of Hamilton also recommended that the federal government should assume all those debts which the individual States had incurred during the war, for the support of it. When the army had demanded compensation for the depreciation of their pay, this burden, at the earnest request of Congress, had been assumed by the respective States. Some of the States had funded this debt, and had paid the interest on it. Others had made no provision for the payment of the interest. But all had done something, by way of taxes, paper money, or purchase, to diminish the principal. These debts

Hamilton now proposed should be resumed by Congress. The resolution which was offered in the House, having reference to this portion of the secretary's report, unchained the fiercest passions of men, and convulsed the representatives of the people, and the nation itself, with strange and unseemly violence ; for it held that these State debts ought to be assumed by the general government. It was condemned on various grounds. Its unconstitutionality was loudly asserted. It was affirmed that by this assumption the general government would acquire a dangerous and preponderating power, and that the consequence and influence of the State governments would be perniciously diminished.

After a long and fierce discussion, the resolution was finally carried by a small majority. But very soon after its passage the representatives from the State of North Carolina arrived, and took their seats in Congress. The resolution was then recommitted, and then after another protracted debate it was lost by a small majority. It was afterward brought forward again under the modified form of allowing the general government to assume specific sums from each State ; but this attempt also failed, and the bill was finally sent to the Senate, containing a provision for those creditors only whose certificates



of debt purported to be payable by the United States.

After the defeat of General St. Clair in the war for the defense of the northwest frontier, against the Miami Indians, Washington recommended the augmentation of the national forces. This proposition created the most furious and bitter hostility; but was finally passed. The increased expenses of the war thus demanded an increase of the revenue; and the committee to whom the subject was referred, offered a resolution directing the Secretary of the Treasury to report his opinion as to the best method of raising those supplies which the increased expenses of the government demanded.

Mr. Hamilton accordingly made his report. He recommended an increase of the duties on the imports. This report was referred to a committee of the whole House in which resolutions were passed, which were intended to form the basis of a bill. Hamilton had recommended that the appropriation of funds for the payment of the interest and the gradual redemption of the principal of the national debt, should be not only sufficient but also permanent. After a full discussion, thirty-one members voted in favor of limiting the duration of the bill, and thirty against it. The motion was lost by the vote of the Speaker of the House.



It was during the progress of the year 1790 that the irreconcilable hostility arose between Mr. Jefferson, the Secretary of State, and Mr. Hamilton. Their differences originated at an early stage of the administration, and they grew in fierceness with the progress of time. It may have arisen, in the first instance, from personal dislike and jealousy between those distinguished men, and from minor differences in their policy. But soon their measures became so widely incongruous, that it seems strange that they could have acted with any efficiency in the same Cabinet. Mr. Jefferson probably felt the overshadowing power of Hamilton's genius, and the effect of his supreme influence with the President. Mr. Jefferson was an ultra democrat. He entertained no fears as to the stability of the government. He had the most unbounded confidence of the ability of the masses to rule themselves. He thought that the people could not err. He felt no apprehensions of the undue encroachments of the popular power; no jealousy of the State sovereignties curtailing the authority of the central or federal government. His constant policy, like that of Governor George Clinton of New York, seems to have been to limit and hamper the exercise of the powers vested in the government of the United States, as being the only possible source whence danger to

the liberties of the people might arise. On the contrary, Mr. Hamilton was the firm advocate of a general government which should possess in itself sufficient powers and resources to maintain the credit and secure the unity and prosperity of the whole nation. He had long observed the evils which resulted from the absolute sovereignty of the States, and of the injury which resulted from their disposition and ability to exercise a pernicious control over every measure of the general government. He also thought that the habits and feelings of the American people were then calculated to inspire prepossessions in favor of State interests, rather than the national welfare.

This schism in the members of the administration was loudly supported by their respective partisans of the press. The *Gazette of the United States* defended the policy of Hamilton. The *National Gazette*, edited by a clerk in the Department of State, was arrayed on the side of Mr. Jefferson. The minor papers of the country took sides with the one or the other of these great journals, according to their respective views. This discord in his cabinet was a source of much regret and sorrow to Washington. He foresaw its consequences, but was unable to heal the difficulty. The whisky insurrection in the western part of Pennsylvania,

resulted from the high state of excitement which then pervaded the public mind in reference to the execution of the laws imposing a duty on spirits distilled within the United States.

On the 5th November, 1790, Congress again convened. Shortly after its opening a motion was made to the effect, that measures for the reduction of so much of the public debt as the United States have a right to redeem ought to be adopted; and that the Secretary of the Treasury be directed to report a plan for that purpose. In his report, in response to this order, Hamilton proposed that the internal taxes should be extended either to pleasure horses or to pleasure carriages, as the legislature might consider most suitable.

On the 13th December, 1790, Hamilton submitted to Congress his views in reference to the establishment of a National Bank, in accordance with a call made on him by that body upon the subject. In that report every argument which was adapted to prove the utility and expediency of such an institution was most ably and clearly set forth. His report was indeed so profound, and so completely exhausted the whole subject, that all the discussions which have since taken place in reference to it, are merely variations and reiterations of what he himself advanced. Many arguments were used

against the adoption of his proposition. It was held to be decisive against it, that no express authority had been given to the general government to create a bank. The constitutionality of such an institution was denied. Mr. Madison was the chief opponent of the bank; and yet it may be observed, that afterward, when President of the United States, he himself frequently recommended the establishment of similar institutions as the only remedy for the financial troubles of the community, and himself signed the charter of the second Bank of the United States. The charter of the bank proposed by Hamilton at length passed both Houses of Congress; it then received the approval of Washington; and has since been indorsed by the favorable legal judgments of Chief Justices Jay, Ellsworth, and Marshall. The first Bank of the United States was chartered for twenty years. Its capital was ten millions, in shares of four hundred dollars each. The installment certificates were in such great demand that they rose to an advance of two hundred dollars, on the first payment of twenty-five dollars. Branches, under the titles of offices of discount and deposit, were established in the chief cities of the United States. The chief bank was located in Philadelphia, at that time the seat of the federal government.

The debate on this question again arrayed parties in fierce opposition, and even divided the cabinet to a degree that menaced its total rupture. Washington took the opinion of his constitutional advisers on this important question. Mr. Jefferson and Mr. Randolph were of opinion that Congress, by the passage of the bill, had obviously transcended the powers vested in them by the constitution. On the other hand, General Hamilton maintained it to be purely constitutional. The President required from each their arguments in writing, which being submitted, his habitual propensity to add *vigor to the Union*, inclined him to the conviction that the bank was fully authorized by the Constitution, and he accordingly gave the sanction of his signature to the act of incorporation. It cannot be doubted, however, that his mind had been long predetermined in favor of the measure; and that however he might hold his judgment open to a conviction of its illegality, should it be made so to appear to him; yet that his wishes and affections toward it, as a favorite feature of his federal policy, had closed those avenues to conviction which can only bias the understanding when the feelings are neutral, and the desires uninfluenced toward a particular conclusion.

The controversy on *Federal Power* and *State*

*Rights* was now started afresh on the Bank question; and federalism and anti-federalism were discussed through all their aspects by enthusiastic champions; the sovereignty of the States being supposed by the latter to constitute the palladium of liberty; and the supremacy and power of the Union being deemed essential by the latter to the preservation of law, order, justice, property, subordination, and peace.

The scheme of the National Bank was hailed with rapture by those who had become suddenly enriched by the funding of the public debt; and in proportion as it strengthened the moneyed interest, did it provoke the hostility and censure of the middle and poorer classes, in whom are often to be found the sincere advocates of the true principles of rational liberty.

From this moment of the incorporation of the Bank of the United States, parties thenceforth assumed their perfect forms of organization and principles.

From this period also we may date an irreconcilable rupture between Mr. Jefferson and General Hamilton; the former the vigorous opponent, and the latter the resolute advocate, of the banking and funding system.

Washington now made an excursion into the Southern States, subsequently to the dissolution of



the first Congress, on the 3d of March, 1791; where his reception by men of all parties, proved the fact that he united all hearts; and that however the measures or the Constitution of government might be censured and disapproved, none would refuse to pour the grateful homage of their hearts into the bosom of their veteran chief.

The second Congress assembled in Philadelphia on the 24th of October, 1791. The apportionment bill now proved another cause of excitement, and divided parties by a broad line of separation. In this debate Mr. Giles, who was in favor of a *full representation* of the people, used these arguments; that the corruption of the British parliament was not owing to their *numbers*, but other causes, and “among these were the frequent mortgages of the funds, and the immense appropriations at the disposal of the executive.” “An inequality of circumstances,” he continued, “produces revolutions in governments, from democracy to aristocracy and monarchy. Great wealth produces a desire of distinctions, rank and titles. The revolutions of property in this country have created a prodigious inequality of circumstances. Government has contributed to this inequality. The Bank of the United States is a most important machine in promoting the objects of this moneyed interest. This bank will be the most

powerful engine to corrupt this House. Some of the members are directors of this institution ; and it will only be by increasing the representation that an adequate barrier can be opposed to this moneyed interest. The strong executive of this government ought to be balanced by a full representation in this House."

The defeat of General St. Clair, who had been dispatched against the hostile Miami Indians, now threw a momentary gloom over the administration of Washington ; and Congress proceeded to augment the army to five thousand men ; after which on the 8th of May, 1792, that body adjourned to the first Monday in November.

Every day added virulence and asperity to the opposition of parties ; and as new measures developed more fully the discrepancy of their principles, so did they augment the inveteracy of their mutual dislike ; and while we confess the truth, we must also deplore the fact, that the power of interest rather than the love of truth, or the practice of virtue, engendered their animosity, and eventually exasperated differences of opinion into an implacable hostility of feeling and passion.

The complaints of the opposition, however, were not destitute of some substantial and established facts to sustain them. The creation of the *national debt*, by

the funding of the depreciated public responsibilities, had engendered, it was alleged, a necessity for taxation on the people, when there existed no necessity for funding, in order to make the rich more affluent and the poor more needy; besides being the assumption of a debt which properly belonged to the individual States. Funding naturally led to excise, and begat a series of oppressive taxes which excited public clamor, and might produce a civil war; besides which such taxes were partial in their operation, and must be unproductive unless extorted by arbitrary means, and wrung from the hand of labor at the point of the sword. In truth the ground of opposition included the best principles of humanity, benevolence, peace, and industry, against abstract equity, rigid justice, and the inflexible severity of efficient power, ready to punish with death for the inability to comply with exorbitant demands.

Other grounds of opposition were also advanced, but were less tenable and more resolvable into the *spirit of party* than based on the solid principles of liberty, or the incontestable dictates of reason. A qualified exception, however, must be made to this remark in the case of the Bank of the United States; and in order to escape any imputation of prejudice, we shall cite, in the words of Judge Mar-

shall himself, as we have previously done on several occasions from the same motive.

The opposition contended that: "The banishment of *coin* would be completed by ten millions of paper money in the form of *bank bills*, which were then issuing into circulation. Nor would this be the only mischief resulting from the institution of the bank. The ten or twelve per cent. annual profit paid to the lenders of this paper medium, would be taken out of the pockets of the people, who would have had without interest, the coin it was banishing; that all the capital employed in paper circulation is barren and useless, producing like that on a *gaming table*, no accession to itself, and is withdrawn from commerce and agriculture, where it would have produced addition to the common mass. The wealth, therefore, heaped upon individuals by the funding and banking systems would be productive of general poverty and distress; and that in addition to the encouragement these measures gave to vice and idleness, they had furnished effectual means of corrupting such a portion of the Legislature as turned the balance between the honest voters. This *corrupt squadron* deciding the voice of the Legislature, had manifested their dispositions to get rid of the limitations imposed by the Constitution; limitations on the faith of which the States

acceded to that instrument. They were proceeding rapidly in their plan of absorbing all power, invading the rights of the States, and converting the federal into a consolidated government.

“That the ultimate object of all this was to prepare the way for a change from the present republican form of government to that of a monarchy, of which the English constitution was to be the model. So many of the friends of monarchy were in the Legislature, that aided by the corrupt squad of *paper dealers* who were at their devotion, they had a majority in both Houses. The *republican party*, even when united with the *anti-federalists*, continued a minority.” These arguments were ably replied to on the opposite side.

These grave charges and imputations, however, were not so much intended to apply to Washington and his measures, as to Colonel Hamilton, the Secretary of the Treasury and the ostensible head of the consolidated federal party.

In respect to General Washington, the purity of his heart and character repelled the approximation of the foul elements of party. His views were national; every pulsation of his heart was for his country's good; and being exalted above the influence of interest by every consideration of character and popu-



larity with the whole people, it was utterly impossible that any party could claim him as its sole leader, or that any of his measures or views could be referred or traced to party motives. If he did entertain one supreme sentiment, it was an honest one, and that was a candid preference for a government of law and force to a government of opinion—a conviction which may be traced to the fact, that he acquired his education under the strict notions of the monarchy, and contracted his habits in the employment of the royal government as a military man:—being still not less a republican in principle—nor less an American in practice.

These conflicts of party opinions would have been overlooked by Washington and wholly disregarded, had they not invaded the tranquillity of his cabinet; and arrayed in fierce hostility the Secretary of State against the Secretary of the Treasury. These officers, from the first moment of their entrance into the cabinet, had disagreed upon principles of essential importance to the harmony of the administration. This radical contrariety in their characters and views, naturally became augmented with the lapse of time;—and every measure of government conduced more or less to widen the breach, as they more clearly demonstrated the irreconcilable hostility of their doctrines, measures and opinions. Mr. Jefferson had



been from the first a warm champion of liberty, and opposed to the federal Constitution as implying a power or supremacy over the sovereignty of the States; and General Hamilton was the most prominent of those who favored a federal government, whose power should supersede opinion, and moderate the rights of the States. On the same principle Mr. Jefferson was partial to France, and Mr. Hamilton partial to England; and inimical to France, as Mr. Jefferson was hostile to England, and her monarchical tendencies.

To trace all the forms of this hostility is not consistent with the object of this biography. As it affected Washington, it caused him the deepest mortification and chagrin; so much so as to draw from him the following letters to the Secretary of State and Secretary of the Treasury, conceived in the purest spirit of patriotism, and breathing the fond affection of a father toward his children. The first letter bears the date of August 23d, 1792. Having entered into a review of the delicate external relations of the United States, he thus digressed to the main topic of his epistle:—"How unfortunate, and how much is it to be regretted, then, that while we are encompassed on all sides with avowed enemies and insidious friends, internal dissensions should be harrowing and tearing our vitals. The

last, to me, is the most serious, the most alarming, and the most afflicting of the two; and without more charity for the opinions of one another in governmental matters, or some more infallible criterion by which the truth of speculative opinions, before they have undergone the test of experience, are to be forejudged, than has yet fallen to the lot of fallibility, I believe it will be difficult, if not impracticable, to manage the reins of government, or to keep the parts of it together; for if, instead of laying our shoulders to the machine, after measures are decided on, one pulls this way and another that, before the utility of the thing is fairly tried, it must inevitably be torn asunder; and, in my opinion, the fairest prospect of happiness and prosperity that ever was presented to man, will be lost, perhaps forever.

“My earnest wish and my fondest hope therefore is, that instead of wounding suspicions and irritating charges, there may be liberal allowances, mutual forbearances, and temporizing, yielding on all sides. Under the exercise of these, matters will go on smoothly, and if possible more prosperously. Without them, every thing must rub, the wheels of government will clog, our enemies will triumph, and by throwing their weight into the disaffected

scale, may accomplish the ruin of the goodly fabric we have been erecting.

“I do not mean to apply this advice, or these observations, to any particular person or character. I have given them in the same general terms to other officers of the government, because the disagreements which have arisen from difference of opinions, and the attacks which have been made upon almost all the measures of government, and most of its executive officers have for a long time past filled me with painful sensations, and cannot fail, I think, of producing unhappy consequences at home and abroad.” The letter to General Hamilton was almost an exact copy of this to Mr. Jefferson. Another was also addressed by him to Mr. Randolph, the Attorney-General.

As some curiosity may naturally be felt to see the report of Mr. Jefferson upon the Bank of the United States, and as it is to be found in but few works easily accessible to the general reader, we here extract it.

“The Bill for establishing a National Bank, undertakes among other things,

“1st. To form the subscribers into a corporation.

“2d. To enable them in their corporate capacities to receive grants of land, and so far, is against the laws of *mortmain*.

"3d. To make alien subscribers capable of holding lands; and so far is against the laws of alienage.

"4th. To transmit these lands on the death of a proprietor, to a certain line of successors; and so far changes the course of descents.

"5th. To put the lands out of the reach of forfeiture or escheat; and so far, is against the laws of forfeiture and escheat.

"6th. To transmit personal chattels to successors in a certain line; and so far is against the laws of distribution.

"7th. To give them the sole and exclusive right of banking under the national authority; and so far, is against the laws of monopoly.

"8th. To communicate to them a power to make laws paramount to the laws of the States; for so they must be construed to protect the institution from the control of the State legislatures; and so, probably, they will be construed.

"I consider the foundation of the Constitution as laid on the ground that 'all powers not delegated to the United States by the Constitution, nor prohibited by it to the States, are reserved to the States or to the people.' (Twelfth amendment.) To take a single step beyond the boundaries thus specially drawn around the powers of Congress, is

to take possession of a boundless field of power, no longer susceptible of any definition.

“The incorporation of a bank, and the powers assumed by this bill, have not, in my opinion, been delegated to the United States by the Constitution.

“I. They are not among the powers specially enumerated. For these are,

“1. A power to lay taxes for the purpose of paying the debts of the United States; but no debt is paid by this bill, nor any tax laid. Were it a bill to raise money, its origination in the Senate would condemn it by the Constitution.

“2. To ‘borrow money.’ But this bill neither borrows money, nor insures the borrowing of it. The proprietors of the bank will be just as free as any other money holders, to lend or not to lend their money to the public. The operation proposed in the bill, first to lend them two millions, and then borrow them back again, cannot change the nature of the latter act, which will still be a payment, and not a loan, call it by what name you please.

“3. ‘To regulate commerce with foreign nations, and among the States, and with the Indian tribes.’ To erect a bank, and to regulate commerce, are very different acts. He who erects a bank, creates a subject of commerce in its bills: so does he who makes a bushel of wheat, or who digs a dollar out

of the mines. Yet neither of these persons regulate commerce thereby. To make a thing which may be bought and sold, is not to prescribe regulations for buying and selling. Besides, if this were an exercise of the power of regulating commerce, it would be void, as extending as much to the internal commerce of every State, as to its external. For the power given to Congress by the Constitution, does not extend to the internal regulation of the commerce of a State, (that is to say, of the commerce between citizen and citizen,) which remains exclusively with its own legislature, but to its external commerce only; that is to say, its commerce with another State, or with foreign nations, or with the Indian tribes. Accordingly, the bill does not propose the measure as a 'regulation of trade,' but as 'productive of considerable advantage to trade.'

"Still less are these powers covered by any other of the special enumerations.

"II. Nor are they within either of the general phrases, which are the two following:

"1. To lay taxes to provide for the general welfare of the United States; that is to say, 'to lay taxes *for the purpose* of providing for the general welfare.' For the laying of taxes is the *power*, and the general welfare the *purpose*, for which the power



is to be exercised. Congress are not to lay taxes *ad libitum*, for any purpose they please; but only to *pay the debts, or provide for the welfare of the Union*. In like manner, they are not to *do any thing they please*, to provide for the general welfare, but only to lay taxes for that purpose. To consider the latter phrase, not as describing the purpose of the first, but as giving a distinct and independent power to do any act they please, which might be for the good of the Union, would render all the preceding and subsequent enumerations of power completely useless. It would reduce the whole instrument to a single phrase, that of instituting a Congress with power to do whatever would be for the good of the United States; and as they would be the sole judges of the good or evil, it would be also a power to do whatever evil they pleased. It is an established rule of construction, where a phrase will bear either of two meanings, to give it that which will allow some meaning to the other parts of the instrument, and not that which will render all the others useless. Certainly, no such universal power was meant to be given them. It was intended to lace them up straightly within the enumerated powers, and those without which, as means, these powers could not be carried into effect. It is known that the very power now proposed *as a means* was rejected *as an end* by

the Convention which formed the Constitution. A proposition was made to them to authorize Congress to open canals, and an emendatory one to empower them to incorporate; but the whole was rejected, and one of the reasons of rejection urged in debate was, that they then would have a power to erect a bank, which would render the great cities, where there were prejudices and jealousies on that subject, adverse to the reception of the Constitution.

“2. The second general phrase is, ‘to make all laws *necessary* and proper for carrying into execution the enumerated powers.’ But they can all be carried into execution without a bank. A bank, therefore, is not *necessary*, and consequently, not authorized by this phrase.

“It has been much urged, that a bank will give great facility or convenience in the collection of taxes. Suppose this were true; yet the Constitution allows only the means which are ‘*necessary*,’ not those which are merely convenient, for effecting the enumerated powers. If such a latitude of construction be allowed to this phrase, as to give any non-enumerated power, it will go to every one; for there is no one which ingenuity may not torture into a *convenience in some way or other to some one* of so long a list of enumerated powers. It would

swallow up all the delegated powers, and reduce the whole to one phrase, as before observed. Therefore it was that the Constitution restrained them to the *necessary* means, that is to say, to those means without which the grant of the power would be nugatory.

“But let us examine this ‘convenience,’ and see what it is. The report on this subject, (page 2,) states the only general convenience to be, the preventing the transportation and retransportation of money between the States and the treasury. (For I pass over the increase of the circulating medium ascribed to it as a merit, and which, according to my ideas of paper money, is clearly a demerit.) Every State will have to pay a sum of tax money into the treasury; and the treasury will have to pay, in every State, a part of the interest on the public debt, and salaries to the officers of government resident in that State. In most of the States there will still be a surplus of tax money to come up to the seat of government for the officers residing there. The payments of interest and salary in each State may be made by treasury orders on the State collector. This will take up the greater part of the money he has collected in his State, and consequently prevent the great mass of it from being drawn out of the State. If there be a balance of commerce in favor of that

State, against the one in which the government resides, the surplus of taxes will be remitted by the bills of exchange drawn from that commercial balance. And so it must be if there were a bank. But if there be no balance of commerce, either direct or circuitous, all the banks in the world could not bring the surplus of taxes but in the form of money. Treasury orders, then, and bills of exchange, may prevent the displacement of the main mass of the money collected, without the aid of any bank; and where these fail, it cannot be prevented, even with that aid.

“Perhaps, indeed, bank bills may be a more convenient vehicle than treasury orders. But a little *difference* in the degree of convenience, cannot constitute the necessity which the Constitution makes the ground for assuming any non-enumerated power.

“Besides, the existing banks will, without doubt, enter into arrangements for lending their agency, and the more favorable, as there will be a competition among them for it. Whereas, this bill delivers us up bound to the National Bank, who are free to refuse all arrangements but on their own terms, and the public not free on such refusal to employ any other bank. That of Philadelphia, I believe, now does this business by their post notes, which, by an

arrangement with the treasury, are paid by any State collector to whom they are presented. This expedient alone suffices to prevent the existence of that *necessity* which may justify the assumption of a non-enumerated power as a means for carrying into effect an enumerated one. The thing may be done, and has been done, and well done, without this assumption; therefore it does not stand on that degree of *necessity* which can honestly justify it.

“It may be said that a bank whose bills would have a currency all over the States, would be more convenient than one whose currency is limited to a single State. So it would be still more convenient that there should be a bank whose bills should have a currency all over the world. But it does not follow from this superior conveniency, that there exists any where a power to establish such a bank, or that the world may not go on very well without it.

“Can it be thought that the Constitution intended that for a shade or two of *convenience*, more or less, Congress should be authorized to break down the most ancient and fundamental laws of the several States, such as those against mortmain, the laws of alienage, the rules of descent, the acts of distribution, the laws of escheat and forfeiture, and the laws of monopoly? Nothing but a necessity invin-



cible by any other means, can justify such a prostration of laws which constitute the pillars of our whole system of jurisprudence. Will Congress be too straight-laced to carry the Constitution into honest effect, unless they may pass over the foundation laws of the State governments for the slightest convenience to theirs?

“The negative of the President is the shield provided by the Constitution, to protest against the invasions of the legislature; *first*, the rights of the executive; *second*, of the judiciary; *third*, of the States and State legislatures. The present is the case of a right remaining exclusively with the States, and is, consequently, one of those intended by the Constitution to be placed under his protection.

“It must be added, however, that unless the President’s mind, on a view of every thing which is urged for and against this bill, is tolerably clear that it is unauthorized by the Constitution, if the *pro* and the *con* hang so even as to balance his judgment, a just respect for the wisdom of the legislature would naturally decide the balance in favor of their opinion. It is chiefly for cases where they are clearly misled by error, ambition, or interest, that the Constitution has placed a check in the negative of the President.”

The subsequent operation and success of the bank



gave ample proof of the vast financial ability of Hamilton. Commerce was immensely increased. The intercourse between the respective States was greatly facilitated by an equalization of the exchanges. The price of the public debt rose to its par value. The revenues of the government were placed beyond the possibility of plunder, and were distributed to the distant parts of the confederacy without expense to the government. Notwithstanding all this, the bank had many and fierce opponents, even during the period of its untrammelled and therefore successful operation. The partisans of Hamilton became immensely wealthy from the increase of the value of the public stocks. He himself remained comparatively poor. But his opponents reviled him as the patron of moneyed monopolies, as the friend of the aristocracy, as the patron even of monarchy. Some adored him as the financial savior of the country ; some execrated him as the author of grievous evils, both present and to come. If ever any man experienced the utmost extremes of popular adulation and of popular hate, it was the founder of the first Bank of the United States.

On the 4th of August, 1790, Congress passed an act, authorizing the President to borrow any sum not exceeding twelve millions of dollars to

be applied to the payment of the foreign debt. Another act allowed him to obtain a loan not exceeding two millions to be applied to the reduction and extinguishment of the domestic debt.

Washington delegated the power to contract these loans to Mr. Hamilton. His commission to do so was accompanied by written instructions, directing him to pay such portions of the foreign debt as should fall due at the end of the year 1791; but leaving him, in regard to the remainder, to be guided by what seemed to him to be promotive of the interest of the United States. In accordance with these instructions Hamilton negotiated two loans in 1790, and others at a subsequent date.

At this period the domestic debt of the United States brought a low price in the market. Consequently foreign capital was directed into the country for its purchase. The immediate appropriation of the sinking fund to this object, would require a large portion of the debt, and would naturally increase its appreciation. Accordingly Hamilton had, with the concurrence of Washington, directed a portion of the first loan to be paid in discharge of the installments of the foreign debt, which were actually due; and had drawn the rest of it into the treasury to be appropriated to the sinking fund for liquidating the domestic debt.

In the payment of the debt of the United States to France, a portion of it was converted into supplies for the island of St. Domingo, then suffering under great calamities. This was done in response to the application of the French minister. This method of payment was agreeable to both debtor and creditor, was in accordance with the dictates of humanity, and was every way equitable in itself.

On the 23d of January, 1792, Mr. Giles proposed in Congress resolutions requiring information in reference to the various items connected with these loans. In his speech he insinuated charges of a serious nature against the Secretary of the Treasury. He intimated that a large balance of the moneys remained unaccounted for. The resolutions were agreed to, and in a short time Hamilton sent in his report containing full information in reference to all the points demanded. Foiled by the clearness and conclusiveness of the statements made and proved in this report, Mr. Giles changed his position. On the 27th February he offered another series of resolutions. He abandoned the charge that a balance remained unaccounted for; but condemned the Secretary for neglect of duty in violating the law of the 4th August, 1790, in deviating from the instructions of Washington in negotiating a loan at the bank while public moneys lay unappropriated in its vaults, and

with indecorum to the House, in presuming to censure its motives in the passage of the previous resolutions. A debate of great bitterness and fierceness ensued on the resolutions of Mr. Giles; but it terminated, as it must needs have done, in the rejection of all the resolutions, the highest number of representatives voting in their favor being only sixteen.

In 1793 the second term of Washington's administration commenced. Though anxious to retire from the heavy and thankless burden of public cares, he was prevented from doing so by the unanimously expressed wish of the nation. Mr. Adams of Massachusetts was selected Vice-President, in opposition to Governor George Clinton of New York. Mr. Hamilton was continued by the President in the office of Secretary of the Treasury.

One of the most prominent incidents connected with the second administration of Washington, was the short war between the United States and France. It grew out of the events connected with the war which had been proclaimed between France and England. The unfortunate Louis XVI. had expiated on the scaffold the crime of having been born the inheritor of the throne of the Bourbons, for of no other crime had he been guilty, whatever his predecessors might have done; and the French republic, then tumultuously seething under the insane guid-

ance of the Jacobins, seemed determined to diffuse the evils of discord and war as far as possible among surrounding nations. The treaties which were then in existence between France and the United States, bound the latter by certain obligations, which, if strictly construed and carried out, would compel them to become a party to the war against England. To some extent this obligation was admitted; and money had been advanced to France to support the war. But the new government of that country seemed to be resolved upon extreme measures in every thing, and appeared determined to compel the United States to take a more decided stand, and to become a direct belligerent. It soon became apparent that vigorous preparations were being made to fit out privateers in American ports, to sail under French colors, for the purpose of plundering British commerce. This was carrying the interpretation of the existing treaties further than the President and his cabinet were disposed to permit.

Washington summoned a meeting of his cabinet for the purpose of deliberating on the matter. He submitted to them the questions—whether a proclamation of neutrality should be made; whether a resident minister from the French *Republic* should be received; whether a qualified or an absolute reception should be extended to him; and whether, under the existing circumstances of the two countries,



the guarantee to aid each other contained in the treaty of alliance was binding, and should be executed? In answer to these questions, the cabinet unanimously advised that a proclamation should be issued, forbidding the citizens of the United States to take part with either of the belligerents, and that a minister from the French Republic ought to be received. On the other points submitted, a diversity of sentiment existed in the cabinet. Jefferson and Randolph, the friends of extreme democracy, were in favor of an unqualified reception of the French minister. Hamilton and Knox, the representatives of the federal school, were opposed to the direct recognition of the existing government of France. They did not suppose that that government would be permanent; and they feared that its recognition by the United States would lead to difficulties with other European powers. They believed and held that the guarantees existing in the treaty with France had reference to a defensive war, and to that only.

In the present instance, contrary to his usual custom, Washington approved the sentiments of Jefferson and Randolph. A proclamation of neutrality was made, and the French ambassador was received with the same formalities, and on the same terms, with which the representatives of the defunct monarchy of the Bourbons had been welcomed.



## CHAPTER XI.

THE AUTHORSHIP OF THE FEDERALIST—ITS RELATIVE POSITION IN AMERICAN LITERATURE—THE PERIOD OF ITS PUBLICATION—ITS GENERAL SCOPE AND PURPOSE—ITS SPECIFIC PARTS OR SUBDIVISIONS—ITS GENERAL CONCLUSIONS AND RESULTS—ITS PECULIARITIES OF STYLE—ITS CLEARNESS—BEAUTY—LOGICAL POWER—METAPHYSICAL PROFUNDITY—COLOSSAL THOUGHTS—ANTITHETICAL FORCE—EMPLOYS CONTRIBUTIONS AND ILLUSTRATIONS FROM EVERY DEPARTMENT OF SCIENCE—INFLUENCE OF THE FEDERALIST ON AMERICAN AFFAIRS—ITS FOREIGN FAME AND INFLUENCE—ITS FUTURE CONSERVATIVE INFLUENCE ON THE AMERICAN UNION.

A BRIEF examination of the peculiar characteristics of the *Federalist* may here be both appropriate and useful, in enabling us to form a clearer and more impartial estimate of the intellectual qualities and the political sentiments of the subject of this memoir. In speaking of the *Federalist* in this connection, we only refer to that part of it of which Hamilton was the acknowledged author, and which indeed constitutes much the largest portion of the whole work. The contributions of Jay were of but little consequence; and although those of Madison were more numerous and extensive than his, yet they were not sufficiently ample to impress upon the entire work the distinctive character and elements

of his own mind. The *Federalist* is in reality the production of Hamilton. It bears upon it the stamp of his great intellect; it owes its existence to his suggestion; its general plan and outline are his; its most thorough and labored discussions emanated from his pen; and its influence and celebrity are indissolubly connected with his peerless and undying fame.

The *Federalist* is justly regarded as the great American classic in political science. No production which has emanated from any American statesman can compete with it in profundity, ability, and power. The great constitutional arguments of Mr. Webster, and the elaborate treatise of Mr. Calhoun on the Constitution, are its acknowledged inferiors. It holds the same high place in American literature which the Letters of Junius, and the Reflections of Burke on the French Revolution, occupy in British literature; while it possesses one great advantage over these celebrated works, in the fact that their discussions are based upon transient and temporary events, which, however important and absorbing they may have been at the period of their occurrence, lost their supreme and overwhelming interest with the steady progress of time. The *Federalist* is founded upon a theme equally permanent and glorious—one which will continue to in-

terest and benefit our race as long as true liberty exists upon the earth: and not only as long as the American confederacy shall continue to flourish, but even while it retains a place in the memory of mankind. It is a complete commentary upon the Constitution of the United States, which is fully worthy of its subject; it is a magnificent superstructure erected in perfect harmony with the symmetrical and beautiful proportions of the foundation upon which it is reared, and destined to be coequal with it in duration and celebrity.

The first publication of the *Federalist* began in the daily journals in November, 1787, and it continued till June, 1788. It attracted universal attention at the time; and to the influence which it wielded the speedy and unanimous adoption of the federal Constitution by all the States is in a great measure to be attributed. Its general scope and purpose were to afford the American people, at the period when they were discussing the provisions and merits of that Constitution previous to its final adoption—a thorough exposition of the principles which should characterize a federal representative government. It combines in harmonious proportions an ardent attachment to the principles of rational liberty, with a clear and impartial statement of the dangers which result from an excessive

and undue jealousy of the power intrusted to the central government, in those unsound and badly constructed republics which, in former ages, have arisen, flourished, foundered, and fallen; and it draws lessons of wisdom from their misfortunes. Or, in the words of Hamilton himself: "I propose to discuss the following interesting particulars: the utility of the Union to your political prosperity: the insufficiency of the present confederation to preserve that Union: the necessity of a government at least equally energetic with the one proposed, to the attainment of this object: the conformity of the proposed Constitution to the true principles of republican government: its analogy to your own State constitution: and lastly, the additional security which its adoption will afford to the preservation of that species of government, to liberty and to prosperity."

In pursuance of this purpose the *Federalist* enters upon a wide and extended range of argument. It first takes into consideration, and discusses at length, the dangers which threaten the country from foreign force and foreign influence. It then approaches the internal condition of the colonies, and examines the dangers which impended of wars and conflicts between the respective States, exposing clearly the causes which may lead to such unfortunate results.

It discusses the effects of internal war in producing standing armies, and various other institutions which are unfriendly to liberty. It treats successively of the utility of the Union as a safeguard against domestic faction and insurrection; the utility of the Union in respect to commerce and the establishment of a navy; its utility in promoting a revenue; and in reference to the promotion of public economy. It then proceeds to examine the objection to its positions drawn from the extent of country included in the Union; and the defects of the old confederation in relation to the principle of legislation for the States in their collective capacities. Examples are adduced to show that the uniform tendency of federal governments is rather to anarchy and rivalry among the respective members, than to tyranny in the central power. The other themes discussed at length may be summed up as follows: concerning the militia, taxation, and various objections to these points answered; a general view of the powers proposed to be vested in the Union; an examination of the comparative means of influence possessed by the federal and State governments; concerning the House of Representatives, and the qualifications of its members, their term of service, and the ratio of representation; concerning the constitution of the Senate, and the number, quali-

fications, and election of its members; of the capacity of the Senate as a court for the trial of impeachments; of the President and his powers, functions, term of service, eligibility to re-election, the veto power, his command of the national forces, and his power to pardon; concerning the appointment of the executive council, and the appointment of the other officers of the government; an examination of the constitution of the judicial department, and its powers, responsibilities, the distribution of its authority, and the *trial by jury*. The whole discussion concludes with the examination of various miscellaneous questions and objections, which gives additional completeness and effect to the argument.

The general results to which this profound and able investigation leads, the system of government which it gradually, beautifully, and harmoniously elaborates, the doctrines which it asserts, and which it moulds into a complete and symmetrical whole, may be found fully displayed in the Constitution of the United States. This fact at once establishes the reasonableness, wisdom, and justice of the sentiments contended for in the *Federalist*. It is an unimpeachable guarantee, the value of which increases with the progress of time, and with the augmenting unparalleled prosperity of the brother-



hood of nations which flourishes under its benignant operation. In these doctrines are concentrated the accumulated political wisdom of all past ages, which has been obtained sometimes by the profound study of great statesmen in other times and countries, sometimes by the triumph and felicity of great States and communities which have existed under similar institutions elsewhere; and sometimes by the melancholy disasters and ruin of vast republics which mistook anarchy for freedom, the shadow of liberty for the substance, and eventually became the victims of irresponsible, tumultuous, and perverted power.

The discussion of the doctrines defended in the *Federalist* is beyond the province of the biographer of their author; but an examination of the style with which he utters them, and of the dress in which he clothes his thoughts, may not be inappropriate.

The style of Hamilton bore the impress of the peculiar qualities of his mind. It was clear, nervous, ornate, and always appropriate to the nature of the subject under discussion. In some of his reports as Secretary of the Treasury, when he is compelled to enter into dry statistical details, his style is plain and direct, without any effort at ornament or display. In the *Federalist*, whenever the

grandeur or the profundity of the themes discussed invited him to a labored exercise of his high powers, his full strength was displayed; the eagle then plumed his wings for an ambitious flight toward the sun, and few could soar as high or as majestically as he. One of Hamilton's qualities as a writer in the *Federalist* was his clearness of statement. As an instance of this we may quote the following extract:

“If the circumstances of our country are such as to demand a compound, instead of a simple—a confederate, instead of a sole government, the essential point which will remain to be adjusted, will be to discriminate the objects, as far as it can be done, which shall appertain to the different provinces or departments of power: allowing to each the most ample authority for fulfilling those which may be committed to its charge. Shall the Union be constituted the guardian of the common safety? Are fleets, and armies, and revenues, necessary to this purpose? The government of the Union must be empowered to pass all laws, and to make all regulations which have relation to them. The same must be the case in respect to commerce, and to every other matter to which its jurisdiction is permitted to extend. Is the administration of justice between the citizens of the same State the proper

department of the local governments. These must possess all the authorities which are connected with this object, and with every other that may be allotted to their particular cognizance and direction. Not to confer in each case a degree of power commensurate to the end, would be to violate the most obvious rules of prudence and propriety, and improvidently to trust the great interests of the nation to hands which are disabled from managing them with vigor and success.”\*

Many examples occur of great beauty of diction and of imagery, such as are rarely to be found in the dry details of state papers. As an instance we may quote the following:

“It is impossible to read the history of the petty republics of Greece and Italy, without feeling sensations of horror and disgust at the distractions with which they were continually agitated; and at the rapid succession of revolutions by which they were kept perpetually vibrating between the extremes of tyranny and anarchy. If they exhibit occasional calms, these only serve as short-lived contrasts to the furious storms that are to succeed. If now and then intervals of felicity open themselves to view, we behold them with a mixture of regret arising from the reflection, that the pleasing

\* See *Federalist*, No. XXIII.

scenes before us are soon to be overwhelmed by the tempestuous waves of sedition and party rage. If momentary rays of glory break forth from the gloom while they dazzle us with a transient and fleeting brilliancy, they at the same time admonish us to lament, that the vices of government should pervert the direction, and tarnish the lustre of those bright talents and exalted endowments for which the favored soils that produced them have been so justly celebrated.

“But it is not to be denied, that the portraits they have sketched of republican government, were too just copies of the originals from which they were taken. If it had been found impracticable to have devised models of a more perfect structure, the enlightened friends of liberty would have been obliged to abandon the cause of that species of government as indefensible. The science of politics, however, like most other sciences, has received great improvement. The efficacy of various principles is now well understood, which were either not known at all, or imperfectly known to the ancients. The regular distribution of power into distinct departments; the introduction of legislative balances and checks; the institution of courts composed of judges, holding their offices during good behavior; the representation of the people in the

legislature, by deputies of their own election ; these are either wholly new discoveries, or have made their principal progress toward perfection in modern times.”\*

As a remarkable example of the symmetry which characterizes the structure of the sentences of Hamilton in the *Federalist*, may be adduced the polished paragraph with which he concludes the Sixty-seventh paper of the series :

“I have taken the pains to select this instance of misrepresentation, and to place it in a clear and strong light, as an unequivocal proof of the unwarrantable arts which are practiced, to prevent a fair and impartial judgment of the real merits of the plan submitted to the consideration of the people. Nor have I scrupled, in so flagrant a case, to indulge a severity of animadversion, little congenial with the general spirit of these papers. I hesitate not to submit it to the decision of any candid and honest adversary of the proposed government, whether language can furnish epithets of too much asperity for so shameless and so prostitute an attempt to impose on the citizens of America.”

The logical strength of Hamilton's style, where logical strength was either requisite or appropriate, is one of the most remarkable features of his com-

\* *Federalist*, No. IX.



position. Often his ideas assume colossal forms and proportions; and when he utters them they come down with sledge-hammer power and weight. These indicate the vast momentum and grasp of his intellect; and they remind the reader more successfully than any other existing production of the prodigious conceptions of Demosthenes, and the ponderous thoughts of Webster. Of this quality the following extract is an appropriate example:

“Our own experience has corroborated the lessons taught by the examples of other nations; that emergencies of this sort will sometimes exist in all societies, however constituted; that seditions and insurrections are, unhappily, maladies as inseparable from the body politic, as tumors and eruptions from the natural body; that the idea of governing at all times by the simple force of law, (which we have been told is the only admissible principle of republican government) has no place but in the revery of those political doctors, whose sagacity disdains the admonitions of experimental instruction.

“Should such emergencies at any time happen under the national government, there could be no remedy but force. The means to be employed must be proportioned to the extent of the mischief. If it should be a slight commotion in a small part of a



State, the militia of the residue would be adequate to its suppression: and the natural presumption is, that they would be ready to do their duty. An insurrection, whatever may be its immediate cause, eventually endangers all government. Regard to the public peace, if not to the rights of the Union, would engage the citizens, to whom the contagion had not communicated itself, to oppose the insurgents; and if the general government should be found in practice conducive to the prosperity and felicity of the people, it were irrational to believe that they would be disinclined to its support.”\*

Whoever carefully examines this remarkable production will be struck with the fact, that not merely were all the elaborate graces of composition at the command of Hamilton; not only was he able to polish both superficial and profound thoughts with the beauty and elegance even of Isocrates himself; but that, whenever the nature of the discussion required or even permitted it, he reveled with equal ease in the most profound metaphysical and philosophical speculations, and expressed the most abstruse conceptions in the clearest and most intelligible manner. As an instance of this we may cite the illustration with which he opens the discussion of the Twenty-first number:

\* *Federalist*, No. XXVIII.

“In disquisitions of every kind, there are certain primary truths, or first principles, upon which all subsequent reasonings must depend. These contain an internal evidence, which, antecedent to all reflection or combination, commands the assent of the mind. Where it produces not this effect, it must proceed either from some disorder in the organs of perception, or from the influence of some strong interest, or passion, or prejudice. Of this nature are the maxims in geometry, that the whole is greater than its parts; that things equal to the same, are equal to one another; that two straight lines cannot inclose a space; and that all right angles are equal to each other. Of the same nature are these other maxims in ethics and politics, that there cannot be an effect without a cause; that the means ought to be proportioned to the end; that every power ought to be commensurate with its object; that there ought to be no limitation of a power destined to effect a purpose which is itself incapable of limitation. And there are other truths in the two latter sciences, which, if they cannot pretend to rank in the class of axioms, are such direct inferences from them and so obvious in themselves, and so agreeable to the natural and unsophisticated dictates of common sense, that they challenge the assent of a sound and unbiassed

mind, with a degree of force and conviction almost equally irresistible."

Thus it was that, on every suitable occasion, Hamilton summoned contributions illustrative of his subject, and auxiliary to his purpose, from every domain of science—from history, both ancient and modern, from natural philosophy, poetry, jurisprudence, moral philosophy, political economy and metaphysics. He seems to be at home everywhere; and no intellectual problem appeared to be too profound for his facile and masterly grasp.

As a specimen of antithetical force and clearness, as well as of rapidity and comprehensiveness of style, the following passage will compare favorably with any thing to be found in the writings of the great masters of English composition. In reference to the proposed powers to be vested in Congress to make treaties, he says:

"These two clauses have been the sources of much virulent invective, and petulant declamation, against the proposed Constitution. They have been held up to the people in all the exaggerated colors of misrepresentation; as the pernicious engines by which their local governments were to be destroyed, and their liberties exterminated; as the hideous monster whose devouring jaws would spare neither sex nor age, nor high nor low, nor sacred nor pro

fane; and yet, strange as it may appear, after all this clamor, to those who may not have happened to contemplate them in the same light, it may be affirmed with perfect confidence, that the constitutional operation of the intended government would be precisely the same, if these clauses were entirely obliterated, as if they were repeated in every article. They are only declaratory of a truth, which would have resulted by necessary and unavoidable implication from the very act of constituting a federal government, and vesting it with certain specified powers. This is so clear a proposition, that moderation itself can scarcely listen to the railings which have been so copiously vented against this part of the plan, without emotions that disturb its equanimity.”\*

A very remarkable attribute of the discussions of the *Federalist* is the fullness, completeness, and exhaustive thoroughness with which they expound every subject, dive beneath the surface of things, and completely fathom its utmost depths. To illustrate fully this peculiarity it would be necessary to quote from that work at length, and to point out how, in some wide range of inquiry and argument, Hamilton sweeps along with a powerful and majestic wing over the farthest and utmost bounds of

\* *Federalist*, No. XXXIII.

the debated land. This our limits forbid. But the following extract will illustrate to a very small extent this quality of the movement of Hamilton's mind, in his contributions to the *Federalist*. When speaking of the propriety of making the President of the United States eligible to re-election to office, after the conclusion of his first term of service, he says :

“The administration of government, in its largest sense, comprehends all the operations of the body politic, whether legislative, executive, or judiciary ; but in its most usual, and perhaps in its most precise signification, it is limited to executive details, and falls peculiarly within the province of the executive department. The actual conduct of foreign negotiations, the preparatory plans of finance, the application and disbursement of the public moneys in conformity to the general appropriations of the legislature, the arrangement of the army and navy, the direction of the operations of war ; these, and other matters of a like nature, constitute what seems to be most properly understood by the administration of government. The persons, therefore, to whose immediate management these different matters are committed, ought to be considered as the assistants or deputies of the chief magistrate ; and on this account, they ought to derive their



offices from his appointment, at least from his nomination, and to be subject to his superintendence. This view of the thing will at once suggest to us the intimate connection between the duration of the executive magistrate in office, and the stability of the system of administration. To undo what has been done by a predecessor is very often considered by a successor as the best proof he can give of his own capacity and desert; and in addition to this propensity, where the alteration has been the result of public choice, the person substituted is warranted in supposing that the dismissal of his predecessor has proceeded from a dislike to his measures, and that the less he resembles him the more he will recommend himself to the favor of his constituents. These considerations, and the influence of personal confidences and attachments, would be likely to induce every new President to promote a change of men to fill the subordinate stations; and these causes together could not fail to occasion a disgraceful and ruinous mutability in the administration of the government.”\*

Such are the literary peculiarities, and these are some of the doctrines discussed in this remarkable production. It is not singular, therefore, that the

\* *Federalist*, No. LXXII



influence which the *Federalist* has exerted upon the political Constitution and organization of the republics of this confederacy during past time, should have been immense. Such has been the fact. It was the chief means of securing the adoption of the federal Constitution, in the first instance, at a period when the highest interests of the nation demanded the immediate concentration, fusion, and combination of the several States; and at a time also when the intensity of party strifes, the bitterness of sectional hatred, and the fierce jealousy of rival commonwealths, rendered the attainment of such a result in the highest degree difficult and uncertain.

Nor did the conservative and beneficial influence of the *Federalist* terminate there. It has ever since moulded the opinions of the wisest, ablest, and best of American statesmen. It has been the fountain whence they drew their most intelligent views of the true principles of government, both as to its construction and its administration. The consequence has been, that the influence of the principles established by the *Federalist*, has been seen and illustrated in the constitutions and laws of all the more youthful members of this Union; whereby, as they successively become entitled to admission to fellowship with the older communities, their State

governments have always been consonant and homogeneous in their cardinal features with those to whom they desire to become united. The consequence has been that the various members which now constitute this confederacy are as one people; and no inconsiderable share of the merit of producing this felicitous result is due to the influence exerted by the able and profound discussions of the *Federalist*.

The wise and learned of Europe have also appreciated the superior merit of this production. Shortly after its first appearance, the *Federalist* was translated into French by M. Buisson, and published in Paris. In that country it has taken its place by the side of Montesquieu's "Spirit of Laws." It has been republished in Switzerland, and has been there honored as the worthy associate of the great work of Burlamaqui on the same subject. It is known and appreciated in every country of Europe, just in proportion as the liberty of the press and liberty of speech are possessed and enjoyed.

It has been asserted by political philosophers of no mean ability, that the tendencies of all free governments are to the possession of still greater freedom, until their liberty, however rational and well-grounded it may have been in the first instance, degenerates into anarchy and destructive license. If

such should be the future experience of the United States, the influence of the *Federalist* will not fail in generations yet to come to counteract and resist such a ruinous result. Its conservative power will but increase in proportion as the wise lessons of experience are added to the profound speculations of theory. The arguments with which it shields and shelters the great central power in the Confederacy from the conflicting jealousies of the separate States, both as against itself and as against each other, will only become more unanswerable and convincing, in proportion as a departure from its sage counsels drags the ship of state nearer to the verge of the precipice of ruin. As this great work aided so effectually in securing the first adoption of the Constitution; as it is vivified by the same intellectual life; as it is instinct with the same patriotic genius; so the benignant influence of both will be coeval in duration;—the *Federalist* will always serve to increase and perpetuate the supremacy of the Constitution; and when at length the Constitution falls, if it ever does fall, it will bury beneath its melancholy ruins the fair and beauteous superstructure which the same skillful and masterly hands have thus reared upon it.

It has frequently been asserted, that notwithstanding the positions assumed and defended by

Mr. Hamilton in the *Federalist*, he was really in favor of the election of a President for life, and of other monarchical or anti-republican sentiments and measures. The following important letter of Mr. Hamilton, addressed in the first instance to Timothy Pickering, will controvert and disprove this charge in the most direct and satisfactory manner:

“NEW YORK, Sept. 16, 1803.

“MY DEAR SIR: I will make no apology for my delay in answering your inquiry, some time since made, because I could offer none which would satisfy myself. I pray you only to believe that it proceeded from any thing rather than from want of respect or regard. I shall now comply with your request.

“The highest toned propositions which I made in the Convention, were for a President, Senate, and Judges, during good behavior; a House of Representatives for three years. Though I would have enlarged the legislative power of the general government, yet I never contemplated the abolition of the State governments; but, on the contrary, they were, in some particulars, constituent parts of my plan.

“This plan was, in my conception, conformable with the strict theory of a government purely re-

publican; the essential criteria of which are, that the principal organs of the executive and legislative departments be elected by the people, and hold the office by a responsible and temporary or defeasible nature.

“A vote was taken on the proposition respecting the executive. Five States were in favor of it—among these Virginia; and though, from the manner of voting by delegations, individuals were not distinguished, it was morally certain, from the known situation of the Virginia members, (six in number, two of them, Mason and Randolph, professing popular doctrines,) that Madison must have concurred in the vote of Virginia. Thus, if I sinned against republicanism, Mr. Madison is not less guilty.

“I may truly, then, say that I never proposed either a President or Senate for life; and that I neither recommended nor meditated the annihilation of the State governments.

“And I may add that, in a course of the discussions in the Convention, neither the propositions thrown out for debate, nor even those who voted in the earlier stages of deliberation, were considered as evidence of a definitive opinion in the proposer or voter. It appeared to be in some sort understood that, with a view to free investigation, experi-



mental propositions might be made, which were to be received merely as suggestions for consideration. Accordingly, it is a fact that *my final opinion was against an executive during good behavior*, on account of the increased danger to the public tranquillity incident to the election of a magistrate of his degree of permanency. In the plan of a Constitution which I drew up while the Convention was sitting, and which I communicated to Mr. Madison about the close of it, perhaps a day or two after, the office of President has no longer duration than for three years.

“This plan was predicated upon these bases: 1. That the political principles of the people of this country, would endure nothing but a republican government. 2. That in the actual situation of the country it was itself right and proper that the republican theory should have a full and fair trial. 3. That to such a trial it was essential that the government should be so constructed as to give it all the energy and the stability reconcilable with the principles of that theory. These were the genuine sentiments of my heart, and upon them I then acted.

“I sincerely hope that it may not hereafter be discovered that, through want of sufficient attention to the last idea, the experiment of republican



government, even in this country, has not been as complete, as satisfactory, and as decisive as could be wished. -

“Very truly, dear sir, your friend and servant,  
A. HAMILTON.”

24\*

## CHAPTER XII.

PROCEEDINGS OF M. GENET—REMONSTRANCE OF THE BRITISH MINISTER—CONFLICTS IN THE CABINET—OPINION OF HAMILTON RESPECTING PRIZES TAKEN IN WAR—LE PETIT DEMOCRAT—HAMILTON'S REPORT ON THE PUBLIC CREDIT—HIS VARIOUS OTHER REPORTS AS SECRETARY OF THE TREASURY—HE WRITES HIS CELEBRATED PACIFICUS—CHANGES IN WASHINGTON'S CABINET—HAMILTON RESIGNS AS SECRETARY OF THE STATE TREASURY—OPPOSITION OF ALBERT GALLATIN TO WASHINGTON—HAMILTON VINDICATES THE PRESIDENT.

THE minister whom the French republic sent to the United States, in the year 1793, was M. Genet, a person not unknown at home in the bloody annals of Jacobin violence and triumph. He arrived at Charleston, South Carolina, on the 8th of April. His object in sailing for Charleston and not for Philadelphia, where the federal government was then located, obviously was, that he might be nearer to the West Indies, which furnished a more favorable position for the resort and protection of privateers. He immediately began to authorize the fitting out and arming of vessels at Charleston, the enlisting of men, and the giving of commissions, to commit hostilities on a nation with whom the United States were then at peace.

The course of conduct pursued by this Jacobin

immediately drew forth from Mr. Hammond, the British minister, a decided remonstrance. On the 16th of May, Genet arrived at the seat of government. The party in the community who favored his principles and measures, prepared for him a public triumphal entry. Soon after his arrival he received various addresses of congratulation from the citizens of Philadelphia. Large numbers of them waited on him in person, and expressed their fervent gratitude for the efficient assistance which the French nation had furnished to the United States; giving utterance to exultation at the recent success of their arms; and expressing a conviction that the future welfare and safety even of the United States depended on the continued perpetuity and triumph of the French republic. M. Genet responded to these absurd utterances in terms which indicated how highly they gratified him, and inflated both his self-consequence and his hopes.

Several days after his arrival M. Genet was presented to the President, by whom he was received in the most cordial and friendly manner. In the conversation which passed between them, the French minister gave Washington the most positive assurances that France did not wish or expect to engage the United States as a party to the war. But he soon acted in direct hostility to this

declaration. A British vessel, the *Grange*, in sailing from the port of Philadelphia, was attacked and captured by the French frigate *L'Ambuscade*, before she had cleared the Capes of the Delaware.

This outrage at once brought matters to a crisis. Mr. Hammond immediately demanded the restitution of the prize. When the dispute came up for adjudication in the Cabinet, it was unanimously agreed that the jurisdiction of every independent nation within its own territory, being of a nature to exclude the exercise of any authority therein by any foreign power, the acts complained of by the British minister were not warranted by the treaty, were unjustifiable encroachments on the national sovereignty of the United States, and were violations of neutral rights which the government could not permit. As to the delicate question of the restitution of the prizes already taken, the Cabinet was divided. Jefferson and Randolph maintained, that vessels which had been captured on the high seas, and brought into the ports of the United States, by vessels fitted out and commissioned in their ports, ought not to be restored.\* Hamilton

\* Mr. Jefferson maintained the same position in a letter to M. Genet himself, July 24, 1793; in which he says: "I believe it cannot be doubted that by the general law of nations, the goods of a friend found in the vessels of an enemy are free, and the goods of an enemy found in the vessels of a friend, are lawful prize." See "Observations on the Dispute between the United States and France,

and Knox contended for the opposite opinion. Washington deliberated long and cautiously in reference to this disputed point. The Secretary of State was directed to communicate to M. Genet and Hammond the conclusion of the President in reference to the first question discussed and settled; and circular letters were sent to all the executives of the States, requiring their co-operation in the execution of the policy adopted by government.

The French minister was intensely excited and offended at the conclusions already arrived at by the American cabinet. He denounced them as opposed to national rights, to the laws of nations, and as subversive of the existing treaties between the two nations. He was encouraged in his violence by a great party in the community who were in opposition to the existing administration; and intoxicated by their adulation, as well as ignorant of the determined character of Washington, he adopted one of the most extraordinary expedients recorded in history. He threatened to make an appeal from the decision of the federal government to the voice of the people! He contended that the real government of a free community rested, not in the dele-

addressed by Robert Goodloe Harper, of South Carolina, to his constituents, May 1797, page 13." Mr. Jefferson proceeds to say: "We have established a contrary principle, that free ships shall make free goods, in our treaties with France, Holland and Prussia." *Ibid.* p. 14.

gated authorities, but in the people alone; that in a democratic State the people, and they only, possessed the real sovereignty.\*

This expedient, so perfectly French and Jacobin in its nature, might have had considerable efficiency in the land of Marat, Danton and the carmagnoles; but it would not answer in the land of the Pilgrims

\* The style adopted by this distinguished individual may be inferred from the following extract from his inflated communications to Washington:

“Every obstruction by the government of the United States to the arming of French vessels, must be an attempt on the rights of man, upon which repose the independence and laws of the United States—a violation of the ties which unite the people of France and America, and even a manifest contradiction of the system of neutrality of the President; for in fact, if our merchant vessels, or others, are not allowed to arm themselves, when the French alone are resisting the league of all the tyrants against the liberty of the people, they will be exposed to inevitable ruin in going out of the ports of the United States; which is certainly not the intention of the people of America. Their fraternal voice has resounded from every quarter around me, and their accents are not equivocal. They are pure as the hearts of those by whom they are expressed; and the more they have touched my sensibility, the more they must interest in the happiness of America the nation I represent; the more I wish, sir, that the federal government would observe, as far as in their power, the public engagements contracted by both nations; and that, by this generous and prudent conduct, they will give at least to the world the example of a true neutrality, which does not consist in the cowardly abandonment of their friends in the moment when danger menaces them, but in adhering strictly, if they can do no better, to the obligations they have contracted with them. It is by such proceeding that they will render themselves respectable to all the powers—that they will preserve their friends, and deserve to augment their numbers.”



and the Cavaliers, in the home of Washington and Hamilton. This insane appeal of Genet at once alarmed, offended, and insulted the whole nation. They became apprehensive for the honor and independence of their country. The difficulties were increased by the presence in the port of Philadelphia of a French privateer called *Le Petit Democrat*; which was about to sail thence on a privateering cruise. Genet refused to delay the departure of this vessel as requested to do, until the matters in dispute were adjusted. Hamilton recommended that she should be detained in port by force. Jefferson, however, dissented from so vigorous and decisive a measure. Washington thus expressed himself in reference to it. "Is the minister of the French republic to set the acts of government at defiance *with impunity*, and threaten the executive with an appeal to the people? What must the world think of such conduct, and of the American government in submitting to it?" Washington finally requested the recall of M. Genet; and with unexpected subserviency to the cause of right and justice, he was in consequence superceded. Nevertheless the American envoys at Paris, Messrs. Pinckney and Marshall, were ordered to quit the territory of France; and the difficulties increased

between the two countries to such a degree that it resulted in a declaration of hostilities.

In his addresses to the National Legislature, Washington had frequently urged the adoption of measures which might accomplish the gradual diminution of the public debt. In this patriotic purpose he was constantly supported by Mr. Hamilton. The indefatigable Secretary of the Treasury endeavored to explore new sources of revenue. Yet new taxes constantly excited the popular clamor, however indispensable they were to the support and the efficiency of the government. While Congress was engaged in discussing a report made by a select committee, on a resolution moved by Mr. Smith of South Carolina, to the effect that further provision should be made for the reduction of the public debt, Hamilton addressed a letter to the House of Representatives, informing them that he had digested and prepared a plan for the increase of the national revenues, and for the elevation of the public credit.\* This report was regarded as a master-piece of financial ability.

This great statesman, wearied with the thankless cares of office, and seeing the necessity of providing

\* Report on Public Credit, sent to the House of Representatives, January 16th, 1795. See Works of Alexander Hamilton, by J. C. Hamilton, Vol. III. p. 457, *et seq.*

for the future support of his family, and the increase of his private fortune, now determined to devote his talents to his profession. On the 1st of December, 1794, he gave notice to the President that he desired his resignation of office to take place on the 31st of January, 1795. During the latter part of his administration he had submitted to the National Legislature several additional reports connected with the great questions and interests of his office, all of which were characterized by his usual ability and profundity. One of these reports recommended the establishment of a mint.\* Another referred to the subject of manufactures, communicated to the House of Representatives in December, 1791.† A third discussed the question of duties on spirits, communicated in March, 1792.‡ A fourth examined thoroughly and profoundly the principle of loans, and was communicated to the National Legislature in February, 1793.§

With labors such as these the connection of Mr. Hamilton with the federal government was about to terminate. There never lived a minister whose conduct and career excited such enthusiastic praise on the one hand, and such bitter execration on the

\* See Works of Alexander Hamilton, Vol. III. p. 149, *et seq.*

† *Ibid.* p. 192, *et seq.* ‡ *Ibid.* p. 297. § *Ibid.* p. 371, *et seq.*

other. Yet the steady lapse of years has now clearly demonstrated, even by the admissions of his former opponents, that his system was a profoundly wise, patriotic, and judicious one. He has very justly been denominated the "founder of the public credit of the United States." The great cardinal principle which guided all his measures as Secretary of the Treasury was the establishment of good faith, by the punctual performance of contracts, as the foundation of national credit. And to increase the confidence of the world in the credit of the nation, he repeatedly urged upon Congress the propriety of renouncing expressly, by the passage of special acts, all right to tax the public funds, or to sequester on any pretext the property of foreigners. It was his policy to enable the country to develop in every way its immense resources. Under his administration the finances advanced to a state of prosperity which was then unequaled; so much so, as even to attract the attention, elicit the praise, and command the confidence of the nations of Europe. He never patronized the doctrine, as his enemies falsely charged, that a public debt was a public blessing; but he uniformly and consistently held, that the progressive accumulation of debt was the natural *disease* of all governments; that it ought to be guarded against with inflexible perseverance and

thoughtful prudence. He held it to be a fundamental maxim in the system of public credit, that the creation of a public debt, when it became unavoidable, should always be accompanied with the means of its final extinguishment. In his last report, he strongly recommended a provision for augmenting the sinking fund, so as to render it commensurate with the *entire debt* of the United States; and he proposed to secure that fund by a sanction the most inviolable which could have been devised, which was to make the application of the fund to the object a part even of the contract with the creditor.\*

\* "Seldom has any minister excited the opposite passions of love and hate in a higher degree than Colonel Hamilton. His talents were too prominent not to receive the tribute of profound respect from all; and his integrity and honor as a man, not less than his official rectitude, though slandered at a distance, were admitted to be superior to reproach by those enemies who knew him.

"But with respect to his political principles and designs, the most contradictory opinions were entertained. While one party sincerely believed his object to be the preservation of the Constitution of the United States in its purity; the other, with perhaps equal sincerity, imputed to him the insidious intention of subverting it. While his friends were persuaded that, as a statesman, he viewed foreign nations with an equal eye, his enemies could perceive in his conduct only hostility to France and attachment to her rival.

"In the good opinion of the President, to whom he was best known, he had always held a high place; and he carried with him out of office the same cordial esteem for his character, and respect for his talents, which had induced his appointment."—See Marshall's *Life of Washington*, p. 343.



Mr. Hamilton's report on manufactures is a production of unsurpassed ability. It is probably the most elaborate of all his reports. It is distinguished by its profound research and investigation. It struck a deadly blow to the then prevalent and fashionable tenets of the French economists, as well as to the kindred theories advocated by Adam Smith in his celebrated "Wealth of Nations." It defended the principles of the mercantile system, and proved that while the theories of the Scotch philosopher are beautiful and even amusing in the abstract, they are not susceptible of a practical realization. Smith attacked the manufacturing and mercantile interests, as founded on an oppressive monarchy; and asserted the absolute freedom of commerce and industry, as unimpeded by legislative enactments and the restrictions of government. Hamilton combated some of the principles involved in this doctrine, and adopted the mercantile system on the basis of self-defense.

Mr. Hamilton, while Secretary of the Treasury, was Washington's constitutional adviser in relation to the duties of his office; and few matters of importance were transacted without his approval. The times were exceedingly critical; and the profoundest statesmen were often at fault. It was the period of the first French Revolution. The whole



civilized world had caught the insane excitement which agitated that nation, and seemed to be in a state bordering on convulsion and ruin. Not content with establishing radicalism on a bloody throne in the chivalrous land of Bayard, Turenne, and Condé; not satisfied with enthroning a licentious and ribald infidelity in the temples where the sublime eloquence of Massillon and Bossuet had resounded; the French persisted in becoming the crusaders of their rotten political and religious creeds, and involved other nations in commotion. They attacked contiguous countries on the continent, especially Holland; and passing over the seas assailed England, and sought even to embroil the United States. To the prudence, ability, and sagacity of two men chiefly, this country was indebted to her comparative repose and prosperity in that portentous hour; and those men were Washington and Hamilton. The celebrated essay termed *Pacificus* was written by the latter in the summer of 1793, in defense of the lawfulness and expediency of Washington's "Proclamation of Neutrality," in opposition to the restless and dangerous intrigues of M. Genet. In that work he clearly proves that the President had competent authority to issue that proclamation; that it was simply a declaration of the already existing law of the land, which asserted

the neutrality of our government; that as constitutional executor of the laws, it was his duty to see that neutrality maintained; that the United States were under no obligation from existing treaties with France to become a party to the war; that considering the peculiar origin of the war the United States had the most conclusive reasons against any such interference; that gratitude to our benefactors for their opportune and generous aid in the hour of our greatest necessity, was not a sufficient reason why we should become a belligerent power; and that in fact the United States were not the debtors to the then existing government in France, but to the one which that government had overthrown—to the fallen Bourbons, to the deadly and ruined foe of the triumphant faction which then held a usurped and pernicious power.

Having retired from the office of Secretary of the Treasury, Mr. Hamilton returned to New York and resumed the practice of the law. After twenty years spent in the public service he had accumulated nothing. Very soon his professional profits became considerable. He stepped at once from the bottom to the summit of that eminence, in the painful and slow ascent of which so many toil for years. But the splendid abilities and the universal fame of Hamilton rendered his progress entirely different

from that which marks the career of ordinary men. He soon began to reap the abundant harvest which such talents, such industry, and such fame richly deserve.

His retirement was not long uninterrupted. He was soon called upon to vindicate the character and integrity of his friend, the chief magistrate of the nation, from the foul charges which an infamous party-hatred preferred against him. Both the military and political character of Washington were furiously assailed. The republican or radical party asserted that he was totally destitute of merit, either as a soldier or as a statesman. Even his personal qualities as a man were ridiculed and censured. It was asserted that he had violated the Constitution in the recent treaty which had been made with England through the agency of Mr. Jay; and an impeachment even was threatened against *him*,\* whom all wise and good men now designate as the patriot who possessed the severest virtue known in modern times; who happily mingled in one the characters of Aristides, Cincinnatus, and Scipio. It was also asserted that he had drawn from the Treasury for his private use, more than the amount of salary allowed him by law. To support

\* See "Marshall's Life of Washington," Vol. I. p. 349.

this last infamous assumption, extracts from the accounts of the Treasury Office were laid before the House of Representatives.

Hamilton came forward boldly to the defense of his ancient friend. He denied publicly and officially in the journals that the appropriations made by the government had ever been exceeded. The infamous charge was again repeated and insisted on; and then was seen that most despicable spectacle which a degraded humanity ever exhibits, when it eagerly seizes the opportunity to exult in the degradation of exalted personages and of immortal names which they had long been compelled to respect and esteem. These unfortunate circumstances induced Hamilton to prepare and publish a more explicit and full explanation. He proved that Washington had himself never received in person any portion of his salary; but that the money had all been received and disbursed by the person who superintended the expenses of his household. He showed that it was the practice of the Treasury, when a certain sum had been appropriated for the current year, to pay it to that gentleman when called upon. The expenses of some periods of the year sometimes exceeded the allowance, and at others they fell short of it. Sometimes money was paid in advance and sometimes money stood to the credit

of the President's household. In all these matters Washington himself had never personally interfered. So complete was the vindication published by Hamilton of his illustrious friend, that even the foul tongue of faction was at last silenced; and the public confidence was restored again to the founder of the Republic.

But these incidents, among the last which occurred during the administration of Washington, and which for a short period very considerably disturbed his repose, serve pre-eminently to show the instability and worthlessness of the popular judgment. In spite of all the unequaled assurances which the long career of public service, extending for nearly forty years, in which Washington had occupied positions of high trust and importance, that his integrity and virtue were immaculate, the voice of the insane and ungrateful populace charged him with being a thief, and even threatened him with an impeachment!

Mr. Hamilton had been the chief support of the two administrations of Washington; and when its jurisdiction terminated it left the country in a high state of prosperity. At home a sound condition of public credit had been established. An immense floating debt had been securely funded in such a manner, that all the creditors of the nation were

perfectly satisfied. The difficulties which are usually connected with a system of internal taxation were gradually removed. The authority of the central government, once viewed by the States with so much jealousy, and yet so indispensable to the prosperity, unity, and harmony of the whole, was finally established. A considerable portion of the public debt had already been discharged, and a method for the payment of the balance provided. The agricultural and commercial wealth of the nation had been nurtured and increased. The numerous tribes of Indians who occupied the territories which lay between the confines of civilization and the Mississippi were awed into a respectful peace, and had become the allies of the white race. That humane system was already begun which has since to some extent been pursued, by which the children of the forest were civilized, and furnished with the blessings and conveniences of settled life. Abroad, all the differences of the nation had been happily adjusted. Spain had been conciliated, and the free navigation of the Mississippi had been acquired. Treaties had been formed with Algiers and Tripoli, which secured to American commerce free access to the ports of the Mediterranean. The various members of the Confederacy had been moulded into a vigorous and harmonious whole.



A great and powerful nation had arisen on the wide-spread ruins of British despotism. Washington retired at last to the shades of Mount Vernon, surrounded with the applause of grateful and appreciative millions, in order there to glide down the vale of years unobtrusively, in the enjoyment of that repose to which he had been so long a stranger. And to Hamilton all these happy results were due, in no inconsiderable degree.

## CHAPTER XIII.

CHARGES OF OFFICIAL FRAUD MADE AGAINST HAMILTON—HE DEFENDS HIMSELF—AFFAIR OF MARIA REYNOLDS—CONSPIRACY TO EXTORT MONEY—PERVERTED BY HAMILTON'S ENEMIES TO SERVE PARTY PURPOSES—HIS FINAL AND TRIUMPHANT VINDICATION OF HIMSELF—HAMILTON DEVOTES HIMSELF TO THE LABORS OF HIS PROFESSION—WRITES CAMILUS—THREATENED WAR WITH FRANCE—ACTIVE MEASURES OF DEFENSE TAKEN BY THE UNITED STATES—THE DIFFICULTIES FINALLY ADJUSTED—HAMILTON PUBLISHES MANLIUS AND THE STAND—HE WRITES WASHINGTON'S FAREWELL ADDRESS.

DURING that excited period of American history which is comprised within the second administration of Washington, party hostility was not confined to assaults upon the chief magistrate alone. The conduct of the leading members of his Cabinet was violently and bitterly assailed. While yet in office, Mr. Hamilton had successfully vindicated himself against several of these attacks. Immediately after his retirement he was compelled again to assume the defensive. In a work published in 1797, entitled the "History of the United States for the year 1796," charges of peculation and fraud in the revenue were renewed against him.\* Then ensued

\* See "Observations on certain Documents contained in Nos. V. and VI. of the History of the United States, for the year 1796, in which the charge of speculation against Alexander Hamilton is fully refuted. Written by Himself. Philadelphia, printed for John Fenno, by John Bioren, 1797."

one of the most unfortunate incidents in the life of Hamilton. In order to defend himself against the alleged crime of dishonesty as a public officer, he was compelled to acknowledge and expose his weakness as a man. There are spots even on the disc of the sun; and the only defect in the character of Alexander Hamilton was the one which was dragged into public view by the defense which he made on this occasion. Impartial history dares not wholly overlook the incidents connected with this affair, and Hamilton's exalted fame can well afford to bear the brief recital of them.

In the year 1791, while the seat of government was located at Philadelphia, a female of more than ordinary beauty of person called at the residence of Mr. Hamilton in that city, and desired to have a private interview with him. She stated she was a native of the city of New York, and a sister of Mr. George Livingston; that knowing Mr. Hamilton had resided in that city she had ventured to call upon him to obtain assistance to return thither, as she had been recently deserted by her husband, James Reynolds, without any means of support. Mr. Hamilton, with his usual generosity of disposition, complied; and at her earnest request visited her at her lodgings. An intimacy then ensued. There is reason to believe that the whole intrigue

was arranged between the husband and wife, for the express purpose of extorting money from the Secretary of the Treasury; for soon afterward James Reynolds himself appears upon the scene of action, loudly asserting that his conjugal rights and honor had been invaded, and that the offender should be made to pay heavy penalties for the outrage. Mrs. Reynolds acted her part with all the adroitness and duplicity of a consummate trickster. Sums of money not much exceeding a thousand dollars, were obtained from time to time by threats from their victim. At length Reynolds demanded employment as a subordinate agent in the office then held by Mr. Hamilton; but the latter, having found reason to suspect that Reynolds was a practiced knave, was too honorable to sacrifice the public interest and his duty to his country to his personal security and private reputation. The demand of Reynolds was peremptorily refused. This wretch then determined upon having revenge. He obtained the aid of an accomplice named Clingman, as vile and as unprincipled as himself. They finally consented to accept a thousand dollars, as a compensation in full for all the injuries which Reynolds supposed himself to have endured. This salvo to his wounded honor was paid. Reynolds then by letter invited Hamilton to renew his visits to his

wife. The fair lady was herself also importunate in her requests to the same effect; and Hamilton complied. Further demands for money were then subsequently made, which were not satisfied to their full extent.

Reynolds, his wife, and Clingman from that moment began systematically to blacken the character and reputation of Mr. Hamilton, and to spread the most injurious reports respecting him. These soon reached the ears of the members of Congress. On the 15th December, 1792, Messrs. Monroe, Venable, and Muhlenberg waited on Mr. Hamilton, and informed him that they felt it their duty to say that they had heard of a very improper *pecuniary* connection between himself and Mr. James Reynolds; that they had become possessed of some documents of a suspicious character; that they felt compelled to lay the matter before the President; but that before doing so, they thought proper to give him the opportunity of an explanation. Mr. Hamilton promptly replied that he possessed documents which conclusively proved that his relation to Reynolds was one entirely of a personal nature, having nothing whatever to do with affairs either of speculation or of government. On presenting those proofs for inspection, the three gentlemen declared themselves perfectly convinced

of Hamilton's innocence, even before he had concluded his explanations; and desired him not to continue them. He insisted however on completing his defense. They were then entirely satisfied of Mr. Hamilton's innocence; and even apologized for having introduced the subject to his notice.

There this disagreeable matter ended, until the appearance of the "History of the United States for 1796." The enemies of Mr. Hamilton in that work denied that the intercourse between him and the lady in question was an affair of the heart, but contended that it was one of financial speculation. The letters of Mrs. Reynolds to Mr. Hamilton themselves proved the utter absurdity of this charge, and were published by him in connection with his defense. The fact was that this romantic connection was seized upon by Colonel Burr, and other political and implacable foes of Mr. Hamilton, to cover him with the foulest and falsest charges of official dishonesty; but the consequence was, that the defense made by the accused was so overwhelmingly convincing and satisfactory, that it resulted only in the exposure of an amiable and chivalrous weakness in Mr. Hamilton, of which the world had not suspected him—so high, so stainless,



and so unimpeachable was his character in every other imaginable particular.\*

On retiring from his official station, Mr. Hamilton devoted himself to his professional duties. He was soon surrounded with a very large and lucrative practice. He became a great favorite with the New York merchants, and they confided their most important interests to his care. The treaty which had been negotiated with England having again called forth the most furious hostility against Washington, Mr. Hamilton devoted the summer of 1795 to a defense of the provisions of this treaty in a series of essays under the signature of "Camillus."† This is one of the most lengthy and labored of his various productions. The first twenty-two numbers are appropriated to an investigation of the ten permanent articles of this treaty. The doctrines defended in these letters remain to this day the undisputed law of the land. The remaining portion of the work discusses that part of the

\* Reynolds and Clingman having both been arrested on the charge of perjury, whereby they had obtained money dishonestly from the Treasury of the United States, it furnished a favorable opportunity to connect Mr. Hamilton's name with the affair through his relation to Reynolds's wife. See "Observations on the History of the United States for the year 1796, by Alexander Hamilton," &c., in Appendix No. I. of that work. There is also evidence to prove that the fascinating "Mrs. Reynolds" was not in fact the wife of Reynolds, but the *mistress* both of Reynolds and of Clingman.

† See Hamilton's Works by his son, Vol. VII., p. 172, *et seq.*

treaty which was commercial and temporary, and which has already expired by its own limitation. The ability displayed in this production renders it one of the most complete and satisfactory expositions or discussions of a complicated diplomatic question, which is in existence. The positions assumed by Mr. Hamilton, in reference to the beneficial operation of this treaty, have long since been amply vindicated and proved by the lapse of time. The main question in dispute was not whether the treaty was in all respects the most desirable which could have been devised, but whether the treaty did not adjust, in a fair and reasonable manner, the existing differences between the two nations; and whether both the interests and the honor of the United States did not then require its adoption. Very soon the storms of opposition which arose against the treaty, and against those who framed and approved it, subsided; and "Camillus" aided very effectually in the attainment of this desirable result. The most important articles were the third, which discussed the commercial intercourse between the United States and Canada, and the tenth, which provided against the confiscation of private debts in time of war. The argument of "Camillus" on the latter point forms an independent treatise of itself; and constitutes such a chapter on an impor-

tant doctrine of the law of nations as Grotius and Brinckershoek might themselves have produced. It views the subject in a comprehensive light, both with reference to reason and principle, to policy and expediency, to the sentiments of the most eminent jurists and the general usage of civilized nations; and next to the *Federalist* will constitute the most remarkable and permanent literary monument of the genius of its author.

The country was now menaced with a war with France; and its two most distinguished citizens, Washington and Hamilton, were forced from their retirement by a strong sense of public duty, to take a prominent part in its incidents. The recall of M. Genet had not, as it was hoped, settled the difficulty between the two countries. Three plenipotentiaries had been sent to France after the departure of M. Genet, of whom General Pinckney was the chief. For a considerable period no official intelligence reached the United States in reference to their negotiations at Paris. At length in January, 1798, dispatches were received from them stating that an unfavorable state of things existed. In the succeeding spring they advised the American government of the total failure of their endeavors to adjust the existing disputes. The French Directory, under various and absurd pretexts, delayed to recog-

nize the emissaries of the United States. They were repeatedly insulted and assailed by persons acting under the influence of the existing government, demanding money from the United States as an indispensable preliminary before any other steps could be taken, not only of reconciliation with France but also of negotiation on the subjects of the proposed treaty. They attempted basely to work upon the fears of the American plenipotentiaries. The superior and overwhelming power of France was dwelt upon. Allusions were made to her triumphs over the United Netherlands, over the republic of Geneva, over the Swiss cantons, over Genoa and Venice—all of which had either been vanquished by her invincible arms or crushed by her more formidable embraces. At that very moment she was actively engaged in fitting out a vast and powerful armament in the ports of the Mediterranean, for some distant and unrevealed expedition of conquest and plunder. The inference plainly hinted at was, that it was intended for the anticipated conflicts with the United States of America.

At length the American envoys were compelled to refuse all further personal communication with the haughty and insulting statesmen who then held a despotic but transient and pernicious power in

France. They addressed a communication to the "Minister of Exterior Relations," in which they explained their position, their purposes, and their duties. This prudent step produced no effect. The insults of France became even more intolerable. Her cruisers waged open and undisguised hostilities on American commerce. The flag of the United States was insulted by her ships on every sea, and furnished a sufficient provocation for the assault and capture of every vessel over which it waved.

At last the American envoys were ordered to quit the French territories. These events were then officially communicated to Congress. A narrative of them was published; and it excited to an intense degree the just indignation and resentment of the whole nation. Congress resolved to adopt vigorous measures of retaliation and defense. The most important of these was the establishment of a regular army. As soon as this purpose was made known, the whole community with one voice again invited General Washington to emerge from his honorable retirement, and assume the chief command. He was the only person who, in that high place, could allay existing jealousies, could command the confidence of the whole people, and



could enlist in the public service the best talents of every class and every party.

In reply to a letter from the President he wrote : "In case of actual invasion by a formidable force, I should not intrench myself under cover of age and retirement, if my services should be required by my country to assist in repelling it." He added that his principles through life had been such, that he could never withhold his services from his country in any emergency of her history. But he intimated that several provisos would accompany his acceptance of the responsible trust of commander-in-chief. He made it a *conditio sine qua non* that Mr. Hamilton should be appointed to the post of second in command as Inspector-general. By this arrangement he would occupy the place of Washington as military chief when the army was not engaged in actual service; and in case of his death, which subsequently occurred, Hamilton would assume the post of commander-in-chief of the American armies.

The moment the French Directory discovered that the United States had taken decisive steps of resistance and defense, they assumed a more rational and conciliatory tone. As soon as Congress uttered haughty and determined language, and imperatively demanded a relinquishment of the arrogant



and unjust claims of the French for large pecuniary advances, their communications were treated with more deference.\* The Directory soon made indirect overtures of a pacific nature, and three American envoys were again sent to Paris. On their arrival, they found the French government sternly grasped by the strong arm of Napoleon; with whom they soon succeeded in making an amicable adjustment of the differences between the two countries. Thus the evils of war were happily averted; the blessings of peace were secured; the Father of his country again, and for the last time, gracefully withdrew into the shades of retirement; and Hamilton pursued his professional career. During the period that an anticipated war with France occupied the public attention, Hamilton had published a series of essays under the titles of "The Stand" and "Titus Manlius," the purport and effect of which were, to arouse the country to a sense of their impending danger, and induce them to provide vigorous and

\* Actual hostilities had commenced at sea. Two severe and well fought conflicts took place between the American frigate *Constellation*, of thirty-eight guns, and the French frigate *L'Insurgente*, of forty; and between the *Constellation* and *La Vengeance*, of fifty guns. *L'Insurgente* was captured. *La Vengeance* after having struck her colors, escaped at night. These brilliant triumphs of Com. Truxton opened the eyes of the French Directory, and quickly modified their policy toward the United States.

efficient means for the national defense.\* Hamilton continued in the office of commander-in-chief of the American armies, to which post he succeeded on the death of Washington, until the disbandment of the forces in the summer of 1800. While he occupied this high office he bestowed the most unwearied efforts to the organization and discipline of the troops. He industriously studied the science of war, and its cognate themes of mathematics, geometry and engineering. Had actual hostilities commenced after the death of Washington, Hamilton would doubtless have succeeded to the military fame and glory of that great man. It is scarcely possible to estimate the splendor of those achievements, which his transcendent abilities would have achieved in a high position so worthy of his genius, and in a glorious cause whose success so completely absorbed his sympathies. It is probable that Hamilton would have stood second in the military annals of the nation, as he now stands in her civil history. In that case it is neither extravagant or rhapsodical to affirm that the celebrity which would surround the name of Hamilton would exceed that of any other statesman and hero of modern times. The prophetic and sagacious eye of Washington

\* See Works of Hamilton, by his son, Vol. VII., p. 590.

doubtless anticipated this result when he demanded the appointment of Hamilton as his coadjutor. It was at the termination of this service, when he again resumed his professional duties, that Mr. Hamilton declared with the proud independence of his nature, that he would never again accept of any public office, unless, in the event of a foreign war, he should be called on to expose his life in the service and defense of his country.\*

Having resumed once more his professional duties, it was not long before Mr. Hamilton was called upon to perform the last office of friendship for his illustrious friend Washington. With great propriety that distinguished sage and patriot determined, before he left this stage of action, to bequeath to the country which he had so ably and faithfully served, a legacy of wise counsels, of sagacious principles, of prudent cautions, and of benignant prayers and blessings. Distrusting his own abilities as a writer, impaired as they somewhat were by the progress of age and infirmity, to do full justice to his own thoughts and feelings on so memorable an occasion, he looked around him for a coadjutor among the statesmen of the land, to whose talents, prudence and patriotism he could intrust the first

\* See "Hamiltoniad," in two books. Philadelphia, 1804. Appendix, p. 54.

draft of so important an instrument. It is not the least among the many brilliant honors which so proudly cluster around the name and genius of Hamilton, that he, while still comparatively a young man, was selected by Washington for that great task.\* Never was a high and solemn trust more faithfully and ably executed. That sublime production known as Washington's Farewell Address, is an immortal legacy of inestimable political truth, not only to the freemen of our own confederacy, but to the whole human family, whose aspirations seek after the attainment of true liberty, elevation and felicity. Its style comports with the dignity of the subject and of the occasion; and no more impressive spectacle is presented by the checkered page of history than the great Father of his Country, after having served her so well in both the highest military and civil trusts, voluntarily retiring to the shades of domestic repose, and thence, e'er he passes quietly from the scene which his matchless virtues had illumined with so many unfading splendors, addressing to his fellow-citizens counsels which, if

\* See Works of A. Hamilton, by his son, Vol. VII., p. 575, *et seq.* Hamilton also drafted Washington's Message to Congress relative to the Treaty with Great Britain; and also Washington's Speech to Congress, December, 1796. See Hamilton's Works, Vol. VII., p. 557, *et seq.*

followed would conduct their country, through long ages to come, along a pathway of unrivaled prosperity, security and glory! And how honorable was it that the youthful pen of Hamilton should have been selected from among those of many immortal men, to give force and utterance to the precepts of such a man on such an occasion! No observer of history can fail to note the contrast which exists between the farewell of Washington to the world, and that of Napoleon, his great rival in the supremacy of modern fame. The one is all serenity, tranquillity, joy, at the growing happiness of his country; and satisfaction at the part which he had been permitted to play in her establishment and elevation. The other is furious and indignant as he is rudely expelled from the gilded halls of Fontainebleau by the fierce and revengeful power of a confederate continent which he had cursed and ruined. He execrates his evil fortune; raves in impotent paroxysms of alternate fury and despair; and dies at last in exile on a detested rock, amid the ocean waste, uncheered either by pleasing recollections of the past or by grateful anticipations of the future! Washington dies like a sage and a patriot; Napoleon fumes out the last remains of life as a brigand and an adventurer!

Mr. Hamilton received the news of the death of his illustrious friend with sentiments of profound sorrow. He rightly appreciated the importance of that event; and felt that now the immense restraint which the exalted and severe virtue of Washington had always exercised over the impulses of party discord would be removed; and he viewed the consequences not without deep apprehension. But personal feelings also mingled with his emotions of regret. The venerable form of Washington, and his wise counsels, were connected with the earliest associations of his own manhood. Together they had endured the toils, had fought the battles, had suffered the defeats, and had achieved the victories of the great Revolution. Together their patriotic hearts had exulted at its triumphant close; and when the jubilant shouts of millions of freemen rent the heavens and shook the earth, they had shared their mutual and congratulatory joy. Together they had often contemplated the sublime perspective of this vast republic, towering toward heaven in matchless symmetry, beauty and vigor, and extending its immense proportions over the whole length and breadth of the continent; and had rejoiced with a gratitude not unmingled with fears, that they had been permitted to act so prominent a part in its creation. But now that confidential intercourse, so agreeable and so honor-



able to both, had forever terminated. Of all the statesmen who mourned the death of Washington, Hamilton felt the affliction the most deeply, and appreciated its importance the most profoundly.

When reflecting upon the character and career of Washington which thus terminated, the mind becomes impressed with a degree of solemn awe and reverence which are inspired by the contemplation of no other human being. We seem to be gazing upward to the summit of that Olympus on which he now serenely sits, as upon the form of one who belonged to that majestic race of beings to whom the ancient Greeks and Romans ascribed qualities and honors almost divine,—to some modern Achilles, Hercules, or Theseus. Other distinguished men inspire us with a noble, but with a much less profound and impressive, sentiment. Frederic the Great excites our admiration for his superior strategic skill as a warrior. William Pitt and Hamilton extort our applause for the splendor of their stately and resistless eloquence. We commend Marlborough and Wellington for their uniform and singular success on the battle-field. We admire Metternich and Talleyrand for the profundity and intricacy of their state-craft. We at once praise and pity Napoleon for the grandeur and the insanity both of his intellect and his ambition.

But to Washington alone, of all illustrious men, do we ascribe the full perfection of heroism; and him only do we contemplate with a reverence and admiration which are unmixed with the slightest alloy of censure, untarnished by the least sentiment of detraction. Of him alone can we say that his various qualities were precisely such, and so proportioned and balanced, as, under the peculiar circumstances of the case, all wise and good men would wish them to have been. In a word, Washington was a masterpiece of human excellence on whom no improvement could scarcely have been effected, even by that great creative power which first called him into existence!

## CHAPTER XIV.

NEW YORK POLITICAL PARTIES—THEIR ORIGIN AND HISTORY—THE WHIGS AND TORIES—GENERAL SCHUYLER—GEORGE CLINTON—AARON BURR—HIS POLITICAL CAREER—BURR'S EFFORTS IN 1800 TO SECURE THE TRIUMPH OF THE ANTI-FEDERAL PARTY IN NEW YORK—HAMILTON'S ENERGETIC EFFORTS TO DEFEAT THEM—BURR ELECTED VICE-PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES—DEATH OF HAMILTON'S SON IN A DUEL—OBSERVATIONS OF BURR IN REFERENCE TO THIS EVENT.

ALTHOUGH it had been Hamilton's settled purpose, after removing the helmet from his brow and resuming his professional life in New York, to confine himself chiefly to professional duty, yet his great eminence as a statesman naturally placed him at the head of the federal party in that State, and drew him into co-operation with the measures of its leaders. The federal administration of the elder Adams gradually became unpopular with the nation. The death of Washington, the acknowledged chief of the party, completed the certainty of its downfall. Mr. Hamilton having retired both before and during the administration of Mr. Adams from all participation in the direction of public affairs, was not in the least degree responsible for the errors of that administration. When Mr. Jefferson was

elected President, Hamilton became the leader of the federal opposition in the State of New York. In order to appreciate his position and his policy in this new sphere, it will be necessary for us very briefly to survey the rise and progress of the two great parties into which that State was divided, at the period of Mr. Hamilton's life which now comes under consideration.

Immediately after the Declaration of Independence, two parties were formed in the State of New York—the whigs and tories. In a short time the whigs became themselves divided into subordinate factions. At the first State election which followed, in 1777, General Schuyler was the candidate of the one for the office of governor, and Mr. George Clinton became the candidate of the other. The latter was successful; and from that day the hostility between the two parties was continued and gradually augmenting. Thus in 1780 General Schuyler became a candidate for a seat in Congress; but was beaten by L'Hommidieu, the representative of the Clinton faction.

As will readily be supposed, Mr. Hamilton, being a relative of General Schuyler, as well as a federalist in sentiment, harmonized from the first with the party of that leader. His superior talents gradually gave him a prominence among them. That

party then included among their number many of the oldest and most influential families of the Colonial era—the Jays, the Livingstons, the Van Rensselaers, the Bensons, the Varicks. In January, 1788, the Legislature directed a State Convention to be called, to whom the adoption of the federal Constitution should be referred. In this Convention the Schuyler party first received the specific epithet of federalists, and the Clinton party that of anti-federalists. The former were more powerful than their opponents in the southern district of New York. By their influence the federal Constitution was finally adopted by the State. About the year 1784, Aaron Burr first began to assume a prominent position in the anti-federal or whig party. He was at that time elected by them to represent the city and county of New York in the Legislature. In 1789 he was appointed through their influence the Attorney-General of the State. By them he was elected in 1791 a Senator of the United States. Through their assistance he was afterward chosen to the office of Judge of the Supreme Court. He still remained one of their leaders and favorites until he was elected a member, and even the president, of the Convention which was called to revise the Constitution of the State; and by their influence and intrigues he was at last elevated, in 1800, to

the high dignity of Vice-President of the United States.

Soon after the adoption of the new State Constitution the anti-federal party became known by a designation which more clearly and accurately expressed their sentiments, and were called democrats. From the year 1790 to 1800 these two parties were alternately triumphant in the State and city of New York. The federal party were desirous that the United States should engage in a war with France; the democrats opposed it. During the administration of Mr. Adams party-spirit ran so high, and became so bitter, that it was deemed advisable for the security of the public peace to pass a sedition law. Soon the democratic party in the State became subdivided into three factions. The Clintons led the first; the Livingstons, who had deserted the federalists, the second; Aaron Burr the third. The superior talents of this last individual had excited the apprehensions and the hostility of the other two parties; and their opposition to him was chiefly one of personal dislike and not of political principle or antagonism.

In 1800 Mr. Burr put forth his utmost exertions to unite together these three different factions of the democratic party. He succeeded in combining them on the ticket nominated in the city of New



York for the Assembly. That ticket included such men as George Clinton, Horatio Gates, Brockholst Livingston, John Swartwout, and Henry Rutgers. These were among the most eminent and popular citizens in the State. The federal party, headed by Mr. Hamilton, made prodigious exertions to defeat this ticket. Both Mr. Burr and Mr. Hamilton were incessantly active; and even at the polls they endeavored to influence the votes of the citizens. Sometimes they met at the same places, and alternately addressed the crowds in able and eloquent harangues. On the 1st of May, 1800, the polls were closed. After a hard struggle the democrats triumphed. The downfall of the federalists seemed to be complete and final. The latter were then disposed to adopt the most ultra measures to prevent so unfortunate a result; and the report was current that, having at that time a majority in the Legislature, they proposed to Governor Jay to summon an extra session of that body, for the purpose of changing the mode of choosing the electors for President of the United States, and placing the selection in the hands of the people *by districts*. This expedient would have given the federalists a majority in the ensuing ballot for President and Vice-President; and this result would have altered the whole aspect of American affairs. The proposition

was in fact made to Governor Jay, himself a federalist, but he refused to acquiesce in its execution, because it seemed to him to be a measure of doubtful propriety and expediency.

In the year 1800 the administration of Mr. Adams drew near its close. The political excitement which pervaded the country was intense. The candidates for the offices of President and Vice-President were Adams and Jefferson, Charles Pinckney and Burr. During the summer of 1800 Mr. Hamilton wrote an elaborate pamphlet, entitled "A letter from Alexander Hamilton concerning the public conduct and character of John Adams, Esq., President of the United States." Its object was to secure the vote of the State of South Carolina in favor of Mr. Pinckney; and the intention had been to circulate it extensively in that State immediately before the election. This would probably have given Mr. Pinckney a majority of votes in the electoral college over Mr. Adams, by which means the latter would have been chosen to the Vice-Presidency only. Yet the two highest offices in the nation would still have been occupied by federalists.

Mr. Burr now adopted an expedient by which he supposed that the forces of the federal party might be effectually distracted, and the democratic interests be promoted in those States in which the elec-

tion had not yet taken place. Mr. Hamilton's pamphlet was then passing through the press. A copy of it was secretly obtained by Burr, and extracts from it were published in the *Aurora* and the *New London Bee*. The consequences of this maneuver were such as its shrewd projector had anticipated. The federal party instantly became violently convulsed; and at length it split into two hostile fragments. It occasioned the total defeat of the federal party in South Carolina. The sagacious measures and restless activity of Mr. Burr at length secured the entire defeat of the federal party in 1800, and completed the revolution which then took place in the politics of the country.

The democratic party were triumphant. Democratic electors were chosen by the legislatures of a majority of the States. When the college convened two candidates for the presidency were found to have enlisted all their suffrages. These were Messrs. Jefferson and Burr. At first Mr. Burr was only designed for the office of Vice-President; but when the balloting began it appeared that he had an equal number of votes with Mr. Jefferson. In this emergency, according to the provisions of the Constitution, the decision devolved upon the House of Representatives. Thirty-five ballots were taken, and the same proportion of votes and the same in-

decisive result prevailed. The whole number of electoral votes given were one hundred and thirty-eight. Seventy of these were necessary to a choice. Both candidates numbered seventy-three votes. Georgia polled four votes. It was contended that these had been illegally returned. If they had been deducted from the ballots, neither candidate would have had a competent number of votes. A union might then have been made with the federal electors in the college. But that expedient was not resorted to. On the thirty-sixth ballot, which took place on the 17th February, 1801, Mr. Jefferson was declared duly elected. He had received the votes of ten States, which gave him the requisite majority. Aaron Burr having received the next highest number of votes, was chosen Vice-President.

In reference to the details of this celebrated contest, various rumors were prevalent at the time derogatory to the integrity both of Jefferson and Burr. One of these, referring to the latter, was, that he had secretly connived with the federalists in order to obtain the predominance over Mr. Jefferson. So generally was this report circulated and believed, that from that moment Burr began to lose the confidence and favor of the democratic party. He published a statement in vindication of

himself, in a letter to Governor Bloomfield of New Jersey, in September, 1802, in which he denied the charge. It is a circumstance worthy of note, as illustrating the great magnanimity and honesty of Mr. Hamilton, that although this accusation prevailed very shortly after the infamous trick of Burr, by which he had divided and shattered the federal party, yet Hamilton directly declared in a written and published communication, that he had no personal knowledge of, or belief in, the existence of any negotiations between Mr. Burr and the members of the federal party.\*

The opponents of Mr. Hamilton did not reciprocate these feelings of just and impartial forbearance. He and his friends became the objects of the most unrelenting persecution. The press was particularly vile and calumnious on this occasion; and some of its members even went so far as to charge Mr. Hamilton with a design to establish a monarchy in the United States, on the ruins of the federal government, which he himself had aided so efficiently to erect. This last charge, publicly repeated by the president of a political club, in a written and printed address, excited the indignation of Philip Hamilton, the eldest son of General Hamil-

\* See *New York Evening Post*, October 13th, 1802.

ton, to such a degree, that he challenged the unprincipled slanderer of his father's fame. The combatants met, and the unfortunate result of the conflict was, that Philip Hamilton fell a victim to the vileness of political hatred, and to mistaken notions both of chivalrous honor and of filial duty.\*

During the administration of Jefferson, the federal party in New York formed a respectable minority. Burr supposed that, by the union of his numerous personal friends with the democratic forces, and by means of an accomplished fusion with a portion of the federal party, he might be elected Governor of that State. Accordingly in February, 1804, he was nominated for that office by a public meeting in the city of New York, composed of persons belonging to these three classes. Morgan Lewis was nominated by the opposing faction. Both candidates were democrats, and both received

\* Aaron Burr writes in the following cool and satirical manner to his idolized daughter, the beautiful Theodosia, in reference to this sad event :

“ You have learned from the newspapers (which you never read) the death of Philip Hamilton. Shot in a duel with Eacker, the lawyer. Some dispute at a theatre, arising, as is said, out of politics. The story is variously related ; ——— will give you a concise summary of the facts, in fifteen sheets of paper, with comments, and moral and sentimental reflections. To this I take the liberty of referring you.

A. BURR.”



the support of portions of the democratic and federal parties. The excitement became intense. Never had political and personal hostility been displayed in so extreme a degree. General Hamilton regarding Burr as an unprincipled and dangerous man, exerted all his influence, as might have been expected, to defeat his election. The press teemed with the most atrocious libels; but in these Hamilton had no share. The result of the canvass was that Burr was defeated; and the activity and influence of Hamilton mainly contributed to the accomplishment of so desirable a result. The State of New York was thus rescued from the official influence and presence of a man, whom the general and impartial voice of the nation, and of the world, has since stigmatized precisely in the terms employed in reference to him by Mr. Hamilton. They have marked him as a dangerous, unscrupulous, and unprincipled aspirant; over whose able mind principle and duty exercised no sway; and as one who deserves to occupy a place in history hard by the bad and ignominious eminence which has been accorded to Benedict Arnold.

## CHAPTER XV.

GROWING HOSTILITY BETWEEN BURR AND HAMILTON—THEIR RESPECTIVE QUALITIES AND DISSIMILARITY OF CHARACTERS—BURR BECOMES A CANDIDATE FOR THE OFFICE OF GOVERNOR OF NEW YORK—HE IS DEFEATED BY THE EFFORTS OF HAMILTON—COMMUNICATION OF DR. COOPER—FIRST LETTER OF BURR TO HAMILTON—HAMILTON'S REPLY—THE SUCCEEDING CORRESPONDENCE BETWEEN THEM—FUTILE EFFORTS AT CONCILIATION.

WE have now arrived at that melancholy crisis in the career of this celebrated man, at which he became the victim of the malignant hate and insatiable vengeance of his ancient foe. The hostility and rivalry which existed between Burr and Hamilton had been of long standing. The dissimilarity which existed in their moral natures would inevitably have brought them into collision. Burr was crafty, selfish, unscrupulous, and ambitious. He could assume all shapes and forms of political and moral character, in order to promote his personal interests. His chief agents and favorite means in the accomplishment of his ends were secrecy and cunning. From his youth he delighted to throw a veil of obscurity and darkness over all his actions, even where obscurity and darkness were not necessary to the

attainment of success. In weaving the intricate mazes of political intrigue, in the skillful use of unscrupulous means, in the concentration and combination of effective forces and heterogeneous elements, in perseverance amid difficulties, in fortitude in the midst of dangers, in coolness, calmness, and determination, Aaron Burr had no superior among modern statesmen. He was eloquent; but his eloquence was simple, unstrained, unadorned, and displayed its superior power only by the effectiveness with which it commanded the reasons and swayed the wills of men. He cared but little for his country's glory; his only idol was himself. He entertained no faith in moral obligations; scarcely believed in the existence of a supreme governor of the Universe; and was, in every sense, a great, gifted, corrupt, and dangerous man.

Alexander Hamilton was directly the opposite of his rival, both in his mental and moral qualities. He was honest and consistent in his political belief. He was very open, candid, and impulsive in his nature. He too was eloquent; but his eloquence was stately, gorgeous, ornate, and polished. He more nearly resembled Edmund Burke both as a writer, a speaker, and a statesman, than any other distinguished man of modern times. There was no secrecy, craft, or duplicity in his composition. He loved

his country with a lofty, generous and disinterested patriotism; and to her glory his great talents and unwearied services were constantly devoted. He was no civilized heathen; but believed in the Christian faith, acknowledged the moral obligation of man to his Creator, and was guided in general by a regard to the claims of moral duty.\* The best estimate of his character may be drawn from the single fact that, until Washington's death, he remained his bosom friend, his chief favorite, his intimate and confidential associate.†

\* In contrast with this element in Hamilton's character, the reader may infer, from the following extract, that of Hamilton's great political opponent, Thomas Jefferson, the leading anti-federalist:—

In a letter of May 1st, 1794, to Tench Coxe, he thus vents his indignation and hatred against kings and priests:—"Your letters give a comfortable view of French affairs, and later events seem to confirm it. Over the foreign powers, I am convinced they will triumph completely; and I cannot but hope that that triumph, and the consequent disgrace of the invading tyrants, is destined, in the order of events, to kindle the wrath of the people of Europe against those who have dared to embroil them in such wickedness, and to bring at length, kings, nobles, and *priests* to the scaffolds which they have been so long deluging with human blood. I am still warm whenever I think of these *scoundrels*, though I do it as seldom as I can, preferring infinitely to contemplate the tranquil growth of my lucerne and potatoes."

† That Hamilton was ambitious will not be denied; but his was an honorable ambition, and such as Washington himself describes it, in a letter to John Adams dated "Mount Vernon, September 25th, 1798." "An ambition of that laudable kind which prompts a

Between such men as Burr and Hamilton a determined hostility was inevitable. Even had they not been political rivals, the opposition of their personal qualities would have made them detest each other; but when the former cause of dislike was superadded to the latter, their antagonism became bitter and irreconcilable. This feeling reached its climax during the contest for governor in the State of New York in 1804, when Hamilton succeeded in defeating the aspirations of Burr for the gubernatorial chair. Burr, irritated and incensed beyond measure at this result, determined to wreak a deadly and implacable revenge; a revenge which would be satiated only by the blood of his intended victim. He industriously sought a pretext for that purpose; nor was he long in finding one suited to his infamous design. Among the many and virulent libels with which the press had teemed during the contest, not a few of the most irresponsible of them meddled with the name of Hamilton, as being the chief opponent of Burr; and one of these libels, written by Charles D. Cooper, was seized upon by Burr as suitable to the accomplishment of his intended vengeance.

a man to excel in whatever he takes in hand. He is enterprising, quick in his perceptions, and his judgment is intuitively great."

On the 17th of June, 1804, Burr informed his intimate friend Judge Van Ness, that he had determined to demand from General Hamilton an explanation and an apology for the various censures which, at different times, he had passed upon his personal and political character. He pointed out to Mr. Van Ness a letter contained in a published journal and signed by Dr. Cooper, in which that writer used these emphatic words to his correspondent: "*I could detail to you a still more despicable opinion which General Hamilton has expressed of Mr. Burr.*" Burr requested Mr. Van Ness to deliver to Mr. Hamilton a note upon the subject. Mr. Van Ness complied; and on the same day the following letter was conveyed to Mr. Hamilton: "Sir:—I send for your perusal a letter signed Charles D. Cooper, which, though apparently published some time ago, has but very recently come to my knowledge. Mr. Van Ness, who does me the favor to deliver this, will point out to you that clause of the letter to which I particularly request your attention.

"You must perceive, sir, the necessity of a prompt and unqualified acknowledgment or denial of the use of any expressions which would warrant the assertions of Mr. Cooper. I have the honor to be your obedient servant, &c."

Upon reading the note of Burr, and the clause



pointed out by Mr. Van Ness, Hamilton replied that the matter demanded some consideration before he would be prepared to give an answer. Several days afterward Hamilton wrote and delivered the following answer to the letter of Mr. Burr:

“NEW YORK, June 20, 1804.

“SIR: I have maturely reflected on the subject of your letter of the 18th inst., and the more I have reflected the more I have become convinced that I could not, without manifest impropriety, make the avowal or disavowal which you seem to think necessary. The clause pointed out by Mr. Van Ness is in these terms: ‘I could detail to you *a still more despicable* opinion which General Hamilton *has expressed* of Mr. Burr.’ To endeavor to discover the meaning of this declaration, I was obliged to seek in the antecedent part of this letter for the opinion to which it referred as having been already disclosed. I found it in these words: ‘General Hamilton and Judge Kent have declared, in *substance*, that they looked upon Mr. Burr to be a *dangerous man*, and one *who ought not to be trusted with the reins of government*.’

“The language of Doctor Cooper plainly implies that *he* considered this opinion of you, which he attributes to me, as a *despicable* one; but he affirms that I have expressed some other *more despicable*,

without, however, mentioning to whom, when, or where. 'Tis evident that the phrase 'still more despicable' admits of infinite shades, from very light to very dark. How am I to judge of the degree intended? Or how shall I annex any precise idea to language so indefinite?

“Between gentlemen, *despicable* and *more despicable* are not worth the pains of distinction; when, therefore, you do not interrogate me as to the opinion which is specifically ascribed to me, I must conclude that you view it as within the limits to which the animadversions of political opponents upon each other may justifiably extend, and, consequently, as not warranting the idea which Doctor Cooper appears to entertain. If so, what precise inference could you draw as a guide for your conduct, were I to acknowledge that I had expressed an opinion of you *still more despicable* than the one which is particularized? How could you be sure that even this opinion had exceeded the bounds which you would yourself deem admissible between political opponents?

“But I forbear further comment on the embarrassment to which the requisition you have made naturally leads. The occasion forbids a more ample illustration, though nothing could be more easy than to pursue it.

“Repeating that I cannot reconcile it with propriety to make the acknowledgment or denial you desire, I will add that I deem it inadmissible, on principle, to consent to be interrogated as to the justice of the *inferences* which may be drawn by others from whatever I have said of a political opponent in the course of fifteen years’ competition. If there were no other objection to it, this is sufficient, that it would tend to expose my sincerity and delicacy to injurious imputations from every person who may at any time have conceived the *import* of my expressions differently from what I may then have intended or may afterward recollect. I stand ready to avow or disavow promptly and explicitly any precise or definite opinion which I may be charged with having declared of any gentleman. More than this cannot fitly be expected from me; and, especially, it cannot be reasonably expected that I shall enter into any explanation upon a basis so vague as that you have adopted. I trust, on more reflection, you will see the matter in the same light with me. If not, I can only regret the circumstance, and must abide the consequences.

“The publication of Doctor Cooper was never seen by me till after the receipt of your letter. I have the honor to be, &c.”

This letter, which so clearly and fairly points out

the ambiguity of the charge made against him, and the obvious unfairness of holding himself responsible for the inferences which other persons may be disposed to draw from his conduct and language, was delivered to Mr. Burr on the 21st of June. The following reply was then sent by him to Mr. Hamilton: "Sir: Your letter of the 20th has been this day received. Having considered it attentively, I regret to find in it nothing of that sincerity and delicacy which you profess to value.

"Political opposition can never absolve gentlemen from the necessity of a rigid adherence to the laws of honor and the rules of decorum. I neither claim such privilege, nor indulge it in others.

"The common sense of mankind affixes to the epithet adopted by Dr. Cooper the idea of dishonor. It has been publicly applied to me under the sanction of your name. The question is not whether he has understood the meaning of the word, or has used it according to syntax, and with grammatical accuracy; but whether you have authorized this application, either directly or by uttering expressions or opinions derogatory to my honor. The time 'when' is in your own knowledge, but no way material to me, as the calumny has now first been disclosed so as to become the subject of my notice, and as the effect is present and palpable. Your

letter has furnished me with new reasons for requiring a definite reply. I have the honor to be your obedient servant, &c."

On reading this letter Mr. Hamilton remarked, that it was not such a one as he had hoped to have received. He observed that it contained several expressions which were offensive, and seemed to prevent any further reply. He contended to Mr. Van Ness, that Mr. Burr should have demanded more specifically what he had said in the hearing of the informant, Dr. Cooper, in order that he might make either an explanation, a denial, or an acknowledgment. He would have given such a response frankly as the truth in the case might have demanded. Mr. Hamilton then informed Mr. Van Ness, that for the purpose of giving further opportunity for the adjustment of the difficulty, he would consider the last letter of Colonel Burr as withdrawn; but if that proposal was not agreeable, Mr. Hamilton had no further reply to make, and Mr. Burr must pursue such a course as he deemed proper in the premises. Mr. Hamilton requested Mr. Van Ness to convey these sentiments to Mr. Burr, and offered to commit his refusal to answer in writing if Mr. Van Ness desired it; which offer that gentleman declined.

This reply was reported to Burr, who then re-



sided at his country-house in the vicinity of New York, on the same day. Mr. Van Ness received an answer the next day to the letter of Mr. Hamilton, from his antagonist. That letter was not delivered in consequence of the absence of Mr. Hamilton at his summer residence at Richmond Hill, near New York; but Mr. Van Ness informed Mr. Hamilton by letter that he desired to wait upon him, and wished to know when he was at leisure to receive him. To this note Mr. Hamilton wrote the following reply: "Sir:—I was in town to-day till half-past one. I thank you for the delicacy which dictated your note to me. If it is indispensable the communication should be made before Monday morning, I must receive it here; but I should think this cannot be important.\* On Monday, by nine o'clock, I shall be in town at my house in Cedar street, No. 52, where I should be glad to see you. An additional reason for preferring this is, that I am unwilling to occasion you trouble. With esteem I am your obedient servant, &c."

The next day, Saturday, June 22d, Mr. Hamilton called upon Mr. Pendleton, his personal friend, and communicated to him the incidents which had occurred. He informed him that he considered the

\* Mr. Van Ness had abstained from conveying a challenge to Mr. Hamilton at his country residence, as his family were then residing there with him.



letters of Burr rude and offensive, and that he could not perceive how it was possible for him to return any other answer to them than he had done; that he had proposed that Mr. Burr should withdraw the second letter, which was the most offensive of the two, in order that he might substitute for it one which would admit of a conciliatory answer. Mr. Hamilton then gave Mr. Pendleton, who was to act as his second in the anticipated meeting, the following letter to be delivered to Mr. Van Ness.

“NEW YORK, June 22, 1804.

“SIR: Your first letter, in a style too peremptory, made a demand, in my opinion, unprecedented and unwarrantable. My answer, pointing out the embarrassment, gave you an opportunity to take a less exceptionable course. You have not chosen to do it; but, by your last letter, received this day, containing expressions *indecorous* and improper, you have increased the difficulties to explanation intrinsically incident to the nature of your application.

“If by a ‘definite reply’ you mean the direct avowal or disavowal required in your first letter, I have no other answer to give than that which has already been given. If you mean any thing different, admitting of greater latitude, it is requisite you should explain.

“I have the honor to be, sir, your obedient servant,

## CHAPTER XVI.

BURR'S EXPLANATION OF HIS GRIEVANCES—MR. VAN NESS—JUDGE PENDLETON—HAMILTON'S HONORABLE CONCESSIONS—BURR CHALLENGES HAMILTON—THE CHALLENGE ACCEPTED—FURTHER ATTEMPTS OF JUDGE PENDLETON TO CONCILIATE AND AVOID A MEETING—HIS FAILURE.

AT nine o'clock on Monday, June 25th, Mr. Van Ness called at the town residence of Mr. Hamilton, No. 52 Cedar street, for the purpose of receiving a reply from him, delivering an invitation to the field, and making some verbal statements from Mr. Burr, explanatory of his position and his feelings. Mr. Burr had instructed Mr. Van Ness to say, that he did not believe that a political rivalry should authorize any liberties, which were otherwise unwarranted, to be taken between the respective parties. He held that his own conduct toward his political opponents had always been to speak of them with respect, either to do justice to their merit, or else to be silent as to their defects; and that this had invariably been his course in reference to Jay, Adams, Hamilton, and his other political rivals. Mr. Burr believed that there had been no reciprocity of this generous feeling on the part of Mr. Hamilton; and that for several years he

had approved the basest slanders which had been propagated in reference to him. He declined to particularize these offenses, as that course would only increase the existing irritation; but having exercised a forbearance which had at length assumed the form even of humiliation, he had determined to go no further. He had come to the conclusion that Mr. Hamilton entertained the settled purpose to insult and disgrace him; to violate all the courtesies of life toward him; to persist in a confirmed and implacable malevolence against him; and Mr. Burr therefore had no other alternative than to adopt the course which he had chosen. He did not seek revenge; he only desired to vindicate his honor.

Mr. Van Ness was then about to offer Hamilton the challenge of Burr when he replied, that he had prepared a written answer to Mr. Burr's last letter, which he had given to Judge Pendleton to be delivered to him. Mr. Van Ness replied that he had understood Mr. Hamilton, at the conclusion of their last interview, to decline giving any written response to Col. Burr's preceding letter; but that if he had concluded to do otherwise, he would be pleased to receive it. He accordingly called on Mr. Pendleton, and received from him the communication of Mr. Hamilton for Mr. Burr, contained in the conclusion of the preceding chapter. After that letter had

been conveyed to Mr. Burr another interview followed between the seconds; at which Mr. Van Ness informed Mr. Pendleton that the letter had been delivered, and that, in the opinion of Mr. Burr it amounted to nothing more than the verbal reply he had already received, and that it left the whole business precisely where it then was; that Mr. Burr had explicitly stated what his grounds of complaint were against Mr. Hamilton, for which he had demanded reparation; and that he did not choose to make any more minute explanation on the subject. What Mr. Burr peremptorily demanded was, a general disavowal on the part of Mr. Hamilton of any intention, at any time or place, to utter expressions derogatory to his honor. Mr. Pendleton informed Mr. Van Ness that he believed Mr. Hamilton would have no objection and find no difficulty in making such a declaration, and proposed to wait on him to ascertain whether such was the fact. The interview was then suspended for that purpose. Mr. Pendleton called on Mr. Hamilton in order to ascertain his wishes on that point. The latter at once declined making any such avowal, which would have been both derogatory to his own honor and inconsistent with the truth. Mr. Pendleton informed Mr. Van Ness of the result of his interview with Mr. Hamilton; but he further inti-

mated to him that if a letter was written to Mr. Hamilton, which would enable him to explain whether he had charged Colonel Burr with any particular instance of dishonorable conduct, or had in any way impeached his private character in any conversation alluded to by Dr. Cooper, or in any other instance which might be specified, Mr. Hamilton would then be able to answer consistently with his honor and the truth; that the conversation held with Dr. Cooper by him alluded entirely to political subjects; that it did *not* attribute to him any instance of dishonorable conduct, and did *not* refer to his private character. Mr. Hamilton instructed his friend further to state, that if Mr. Burr would specify any other particular language or conversation, in which he charged that his honor had been assailed, Mr. Hamilton would at once return a frank avowal or denial, as the case might be.\*

Every impartial person will suppose that this statement would have satisfied even the punctilious enmity of Colonel Burr. The latter had charged

\* Mr. Hamilton instructed Pendleton to say more explicitly that the exact expressions of the conversation held with Dr. Cooper, at Albany, he could not remember, but to the best of his recollection it consisted of comments on the political principles and views of Colonel Burr, and the results which might be expected from them, in the event of his election as governor, *without reference to any particular instance of past conduct, or to his private character.*



Mr. Hamilton with insulting his honor in a conversation with Dr. Cooper. No particular words were specified; the complaint was general, and referred to the conversation as a whole. In answer to that charge Mr. Hamilton replies in general, that no insult or injury to the private character of Mr. Burr was intended in the conversation alluded to by Dr. Cooper—the very one specified by Mr. Burr, as containing the objectionable expressions. But Col. Burr was determined not to be satisfied with any fair and just explanation. He thirsted for the blood of his adversary; and nothing but such a dishonorable avowal as he knew Mr. Hamilton was the last of living men to make, would propitiate him. He informed Mr. Pendleton therefore, through Mr. Van Ness, that he considered Mr. Hamilton's proposition as a mere evasion, which exhibited a desire to leave the injurious impressions which had been made by his slanderous statements still in existence; and that having begun to vindicate his honor he should persist in it till that vindication was complete. The communication of Mr. Van Ness to Mr. Pendleton, expressive of the views of Mr. Burr, was as follows:

“SIR: The letter which you yesterday delivered to me, and your subsequent communication, in Colonel Burr's opinion, evince no disposition on the part of General Hamilton to come to a satisfactory



accommodation. The injury complained of and the reparation expected are so definitely expressed in Colonel Burr's letter of the 21st instant, that there is not perceived a necessity for further explanation on his part. The difficulty that would result from confining the inquiry to any particular times and occasions must be manifest. The denial of a specified conversation only would leave strong implication that on other occasions improper language had been used. When and where injurious opinions and expressions had been uttered by General Hamilton must be best known to him, and of him only will Colonel Burr inquire. No denial or declaration will be satisfactory unless it be general, so as wholly to exclude the idea that rumors derogatory to Colonel Burr's honor has originated with General Hamilton, or have been fairly inferred from any thing he has said. A definite reply to a requisition of this nature was demanded by Colonel Burr's letter of the 21st instant. This being refused, invites the alternative alluded to in General Hamilton's letter of the 20th.

“It was required by the position in which the controversy was placed by General Hamilton on Friday (June 22d) last, and I was immediately furnished with a communication demanding a personal interview. The necessity of this measure has not,

in the opinion of Colonel Burr, been diminished by the general's last letter, or any communication which has since been received. I am, consequently, again instructed to deliver you a message as soon as it may be convenient for you to receive it. I beg, therefore, you will be so good as to inform me at what hour I can have the pleasure of seeing you. Your most obedient and humble servant, &c."

On communicating to Mr. Hamilton the contents of this letter, he at once perceived the determination of Colonel Burr not to be appeased. He saw that his antagonist instead of facilitating an accommodation, had even enlarged and extended the grounds of inquiry; and instead of proposing a specific case for explanation and adjustment, had unwarrantably demanded what was in substance the same as an examination into all his most confidential correspondence and conversations, during the whole period of his acquaintance with Colonel Burr. He asserted that he was willing to meet any particular case, when specified, with a full acknowledgment or denial; but he declared that he could not be called upon to answer at large every thing that he may have said at any time or place in reference to Mr. Burr. He justly refused to be interrogated generally as to all the countless rumors which were

afloat derogatory to the character of Colonel Burr, many of which were doubtless even unknown to him. Nevertheless he asserts his unwillingness to come to any explanation or accommodation of the difficulty, unless it be a perfectly honorable one. He added that he saw very clearly, in the course of conduct pursued by Mr. Burr, a predetermined hostility which, he did not doubt, would be still adhered to, and which precluded the possibility of an amicable arrangement.

The positions thus assumed by Mr. Hamilton were undeniably true, as will be apparent from the correspondence itself. So plainly do they approve themselves to every impartial mind, so clearly do they involve Burr in an evident determination to shed blood, that he thought it necessary to accompany the challenge which ensued with the following explanatory letter from his principal, in order to give some show of decency to his pertinacious and unyielding vengeance.

“SIR: The letter which I had the honor to receive from you, under date of yesterday, states, among other things, that, in General Hamilton’s opinion, Colonel Burr has taken a very indefinite ground, in which he evinces nothing short of predetermined hostility, and General Hamilton thinks it inadmissible that the inquiry should extend to

his confidential as well as other conversations. To this Colonel Burr can only reply, that secret whispers traducing his fame and impeaching his honor are at least equally injurious with slanders publicly uttered; that General Hamilton had at no time and in no place, a right to use any such injurious expression; and that the partial negative he is disposed to give, with the reservations he wishes to make, are proofs that he has done the injury specified.

“Colonel Burr’s request was, in the first instance, proposed in a form the most simple, in order that General Hamilton might give to the affair that course to which he might be induced by his temper and his knowledge of facts. Colonel Burr trusted with confidence that from the frankness of a soldier and the candor of a gentleman, he might expect an ingenuous declaration. That if, as he had reason to believe, General Hamilton had used expressions derogatory to his honor, he would have had the magnanimity to retract them; and that if, from his language, injurious inferences had been improperly drawn, he would have perceived the propriety of correcting errors which might thus have been widely diffused. With these impressions Colonel Burr was greatly surprised at receiving a letter which he considered as evasive, and which, in manner, he deemed not altogether decorous. In one expectation, how-

ever, he was not wholly deceived; for the close of General Hamilton's letter contained an intimation that, if Colonel Burr should dislike his refusal to acknowledge or deny, he was ready to meet the consequences. This Colonel Burr deemed a sort of defiance, and would have felt justified in making it the basis of an immediate message: but, as the communication contained something concerning the indefiniteness of the request; as he believed it rather the offspring of false pride than of reflection; and as he felt the utmost reluctance to proceed to extremities while any other hope remained, his request was repeated in terms more explicit. The replies and propositions on the part of General Hamilton have, in Colonel's Burr's opinion, been constantly, in substance, the same.

“Colonel Burr disavows all motives of predetermined hostility, a charge by which he thinks insult added to injury. He feels as a gentleman should when his honor is impeached or assailed; and, without sensations of hostility or wishes of revenge, he is determined to vindicate that honor at such hazard as the nature of the case demands.

“The length to which this correspondence has extended only tending to prove that the satisfactory redress, earnestly desired, cannot be attained, he deems it useless to offer any proposition except

the single message which I shall now have the honor to deliver. With great respect, your obedient servant, &c."

Upon the receipt of the preceding letter and the challenge, Mr. Pendleton informed Mr. Van Ness that Mr. Hamilton desired the postponement of the interview until after the close of the circuit of the Supreme Court then in session at New York. He stated that he had some important causes then about to be tried, and that if he should withdraw his services from his clients at that moment it would involve them in great trouble and inconvenience. This request was complied with, and the meeting postponed until Mr. Pendleton should inform Mr. Van Ness that Mr. Hamilton was at leisure to meet Mr. Burr. At this interview Mr. Pendleton offered to Mr. Van Ness the following statement of Mr. Hamilton in reference to the existing difficulties; but that gentleman refused to receive it, alleging, that by the acceptance of the challenge, all further communication of any kind was precluded:

"Whether the observations on this letter are designed merely to justify the result which is indicated in the close of the letter, or may be intended to give an opening for rendering any thing explicit which may have been deemed vague heretofore, can only be judged of by the sequel. At any rate,



it appears to me necessary not to be misunderstood. Mr. Pendleton is therefore authorized to say, that in the course of the present discussion, written or verbal, there has been no intention to evade, defy, or insult, but a sincere disposition to avoid extremities, if it could be done with propriety. With this view General Hamilton has been ready to enter into a frank and free explanation on any and every object of a specific nature; but not to answer a general and abstract inquiry, embracing a period too long for any accurate recollection, and exposing him to unpleasant criticisms from, or unpleasant discussions with, any and every person who may have understood him in an unfavorable sense. This (admitting that he could answer in a manner the most satisfactory to Colonel Burr) he should deem inadmissible in principle and precedent, and humiliating in practice. To this, therefore, he can never submit. Frequent allusion has been made to slanders said to be in circulation. Whether they are openly or in whispers, they have a form and shape, and might be specified.

“If the alternative alluded to in the close of the letter is definitively tendered, it must be accepted; the time, place, and manner to be afterward regulated. I should not think it right, in the midst of a circuit court, to withdraw my services

from those who may have confided important interests to me, and expose them to the embarrassment of seeking other counsel, who may not have time to be sufficiently instructed in their causes. I shall also want a little time to make some arrangements respecting my own affairs."

## CHAPTER XVII.

HAMILTON PREPARES FOR THE MEETING—HIS WILL—HIS WRITTEN TESTIMONY AGAINST DUELLING—TIME AND PLACE FOR THE INTERVIEW APPOINTED—MEETING OF THE PARTIES—RULES TO GOVERN THEIR CONDUCT—HAMILTON FALLS.

THUS was the illustrious victim dragged to the altar of sacrifice! The implacable hate of Burr demanded the life-blood of this great statesman and patriot, who had so long and so often foiled his unprincipled schemes of ambition and aggrandizement, and in so doing had so well served his country. Yet we cannot but pause here a moment, and reflect upon the excessive scrupulousness of that delicate sense of honor which prevented Hamilton from saying to his foe, that he had satisfactorily explained the specific charge in reference to the conversation held with Dr. Cooper; that he had disavowed any strictures upon his private character; that all men had a right to express their opinion as to the tendency of the political opinions and measures of a public man, and especially of a candidate for a high and important public office; and that for so doing no demand of justice or reason, nor even

the principles of the code of honor—more properly termed the code of infamy, and stamped as such by the laws of many civilized States—could require him to offer his life in atonement.

With what feelings of regret must not such a man as Hamilton have prepared himself for that final meeting? He knew that Colonel Burr was an adept in the use of deadly weapons; and that in all probability, he should fall. In that event he had much to lose. The heart of an affectionate wife would be rent with agony; his young children would be rendered fatherless; his country would be deprived of his future usefulness; and one of the most brilliant and successful careers ever run by a patriotic and honorable aspirant would end prematurely in darkness and gloom.

Nor can we fail to admire the self-possession, the constancy, and the firmness of mind with which this remarkable man conducted the important and responsible professional affairs which demanded his attention in the interval between the acceptance of the challenge and the hour of meeting. No perturbation or anxiety was apparent to the most scrutinizing observer of that intelligent and expressive countenance. If sorrowful thoughts of those whom he would leave behind him ever forced themselves on his attention, they were veiled from

the view of others; and never, in the whole course of his professional life had General Hamilton been more eloquent, more learned, more sagacious, or more triumphant in the trial of his causes than during the three last weeks of his labors at the bar.

As the circuit drew toward its close he began to prepare his affairs for the contemplated meeting. His first act was to execute his will. It was as follows:

“In the name of God, Amen. I, Alexander Hamilton, of the city of New York, counselor-at-law, do make this my last will and testament, as follows: First. I appoint John B. Church, Nicholas Fish, and Nathaniel Pendleton, of the city aforesaid, Esquires, to be executors and trustees of this my last will, and I devise to them, their heirs and assigns as joint tenants and not as tenants in common, all my estate real and personal whatsoever, and wheresoever, upon trust at their discretion, to sell and dispose of the same at such time and times, in such manner, and upon such terms as they the survivors and survivor shall think fit, and out of the proceeds to pay all the debts which I shall owe at the time of my decease; in whole, if the fund be sufficient; proportionably, if it shall be insufficient; and the residue, if any there shall be, to pay and

to deliver to my excellent and dear wife Elizabeth Hamilton.

“Though if it should please God to spare my life, I may look for a considerable surplus out of my present property ; yet, if he should speedily call me to the eternal world, a forced sale, as is usual, may possibly render it insufficient to satisfy my debts. I pray God that something may remain for the maintenance and education of my dear wife and children. But should it, on the contrary happen, that there is not enough for the payment of my debts, I entreat my dear children, if they or any of them should ever be able, to make up the deficiency. I without hesitation commit to their delicacy a wish that is dictated by my own. Though conscious that I have too far sacrificed the interests of my family to public avocations, and on this account have the less claim to burden my children, yet I trust in their magnanimity to appreciate, as they ought, this my request. In so unfavorable an event of things, the support of their dear mother, with the most respectful and tender attention, is a duty, all the sacredness of which they will feel. Probably her own patrimonial resources will preserve her from indigence. But in all situations they are charged to bear in mind that she has been to them the most devoted and best of mothers.



In testimony whereof, I have hereunto subscribed my hand, the 9th day of July, 1804."

Having performed this last duty to his family, General Hamilton next acquitted himself of that which he owed to his country and to the world, by placing on record his protest against the prevalence and power of the barbarous code to which he himself was about to fall a victim. Among the papers which he left behind him was the following :\*

"On my expected interview with Colonel Burr, I think it proper to make some remarks explanatory of my conduct, motives, and views. I was certainly desirous of avoiding this interview for the most cogent reasons.

"1. My religious and moral principles are strongly opposed to the practice of duelling, and it would ever give me pain to be obliged to shed the blood of a fellow-creature in a private combat forbidden by the laws.

"2. My wife and children are extremely dear to me, and my life is of the utmost importance to them in various views.

\* Mr. Hamilton also wrote a letter for Mrs. Hamilton, to be delivered in case he fell. In it he assured her that he had taken all possible means to avoid the duel, except in acting in such a manner as would forfeit her esteem; that he had determined not to fire at Burr, and that he expected to fall. He asked her forgiveness for inflicting so much pain, and commended her and her children to God.

“3. I feel a sense of obligation toward my creditors; who, in case of accident to me, by the forced sale of my property, may be in some degree sufferers. I did not think myself at liberty, as a man of probity, likely to expose them to this hazard.

“4. I am conscious of no *ill-will* to Colonel Burr distinct from political opposition, which, as I trust, has proceeded from pure and upright motives.

“Lastly, I shall hazard much, and can possibly gain nothing by the issue of the interview.

“But it was, as I conceive, impossible for me to avoid it. There were *intrinsic* difficulties in the thing, and *artificial* embarrassments from the manner of proceeding on the part of Colonel Burr.

“*Intrinsic*, because it is not to be denied that my animadversions on the political principles, character, and views of Colonel Burr have been extremely severe; and, on different occasions, I, in common with many others, have made very unfavorable criticisms on particular instances of the private conduct of this gentleman.

“In proportion as these impressions were entertained with sincerity, and uttered with motives and for purposes which might appear to me commendable, would be the difficulty (until they could be removed by evidence of their being erroneous) of

explanation or apology. *The disavowal required of me by Colonel Burr, in a general and definite form, was out of my power*, if it had really been proper for me to submit to be so questioned; but I was sincerely of the opinion that this could not be; and in this opinion I was confirmed by that of a very moderate and judicious friend whom I consulted. Besides that, Colonel Burr appeared to me to assume, in the first instance, a tone unnecessarily peremptory and menacing; and, in the second, positively offensive. Yet I wished, as far as might be practicable, to leave a door open for accommodation. This, I think, will be inferred from the written communications made by me and by my direction, and would be confirmed by the conversations between Mr. Van Ness and myself, which arose out of the subject.

“I am not sure whether, under all the circumstances, I did not go further in the attempt to accommodate than a punctilious delicacy will justify. If so, I hope the motives I have stated will excuse me.

“It is not my design, by what I have said, to affix any odium on the character of Colonel Burr in this case. *He doubtless has heard of animadversions of mine which bore very hard upon him*; and it is probable that, as usual, they were accompanied with

some falsehoods. He may have supposed himself under a necessity of acting as he has done. I hope the grounds of his proceeding have been such as ought to satisfy his own conscience.

“I trust, at the same time, that the world will do me the justice to believe *that I have not censured him on light grounds* nor from unworthy inducements. *I certainly have had strong reasons for what I have said, though it is possible that in some particulars I have been influenced by misconstruction or misinformation.* It is also my ardent wish *that I may have been more mistaken than I think I have been;* and that he, by his future conduct, may show himself worthy of all confidence and esteem, and prove an ornament and blessing to the country.

“As well, because it is possible that I may have injured Colonel Burr, however convinced myself that my opinions and declarations have been well founded, as from my general principles and temper in relation to similar affairs, I have resolved, if our interview is conducted in the usual manner, and it pleases God to give me the opportunity, to *reserve and throw away my first fire*; and I have thoughts even of reserving my second, and thus giving a double opportunity to Colonel Burr to pause and repent.

“It is not my intention, however, to enter into

any explanation on the ground. Apology, from principle I hope rather than pride, is out of the question.

“To those who, with me, abhorring the practice of duelling, may think that I ought on no account to have added to the number of bad examples, I answer, that my *relative* situation, as well in public as in private, enforcing all the considerations which constitute what men of the world denominate honor, imposed on me, as I thought, a peculiar necessity not to decline the call. The ability to be in future useful, whether in resisting mischief or effecting good in those crises of our public affairs which seem likely to happen, would probably be inseparable from a conformity with public prejudice in this particular.”

On Friday, July 6th, the circuit having terminated, Mr. Pendleton informed Mr. Van Ness that Mr. Hamilton would be prepared to meet Mr. Burr at any time after the succeeding Sunday. On the following Monday the particulars of the duel were arranged. On Wednesday the 11th of July, 1804, the parties met at seven o'clock in the morning at Weahawken, three miles above Hoboken, on the Jersey shore, opposite to New York.

Eager for the conflict and the slaughter, Colonel Burr arrived first upon the ground. When his an-

tagonist appeared they formally exchanged salutations. The seconds then proceeded to make the necessary arrangements. They measured the distance, which was ten paces. They cast lots for the choice of position and for the right to give the word to fire. Both of these fell to the second of General Hamilton. The pistols were then loaded in each other's presence. The parties then took their respective stations. Mr. Pendleton explained the rules which were to govern the combatants in firing. These were as follows: The parties being placed at their positions, the second who gives the word shall ask them whether they are ready. Being answered affirmatively, he shall say: *Present!* After this order, the parties shall present and fire *when they please*. If one fires before the other, the opposite second shall say, *one, two, three, fire*; and he shall then fire or lose his shot. Mr. Pendleton having inquired whether the parties were ready, and being answered affirmatively, gave the word *present*. Mr. Burr fired instantly. Mr. Pendleton always maintained that Mr. Hamilton did not fire first, and that he did not fire at all, at his opponent. Mr. Van Ness always insisted that Mr. Hamilton did fire first, and at his antagonist. The declaration of Mr. Hamilton himself, as contained in the document which he prepared before the conflict, would clearly



indicate that it was not his intention to fire at Mr. Burr; and a declaration of purpose from a man of such unimpeachable veracity and integrity as Mr. Hamilton is as conclusive as any extrinsic and competent testimony. What ever the real fact may have been, Mr. Burr was uninjured; and Mr. Hamilton instantly fell. It is said that at the first moment, Burr seeing Hamilton fall advanced toward him a few steps rapidly, with a manner and gesture which seemed indicative of regret. But this incident, if it actually occurred, was doubtless a hypocritical part of the drama which, on this remarkable occasion, he had determined to play. No further communication took place between the principals, and Colonel Burr without speaking a word turned away and left the field. He returned immediately to New York, in the barge which had conveyed him to the scene of conflict. And thus,

“A *falcon* towering in his pride of place,  
Was by a mousing *owl* hawk'd at and kill'd.”

## CHAPTER XVIII.

THE NATURE OF HAMILTON'S WOUND—HE IS REMOVED TO THE HOUSE OF MR. BAYARD—HIS INTERVIEW WITH DR. MASON—HIS INTERVIEW WITH BISHOP MOORE—HE RECEIVES THE LORD'S SUPPER—HIS RELIGIOUS OPINIONS—HIS LAST INTERVIEW WITH HIS FAMILY—HIS DEATH—HIS FUNERAL—ORATION OF GOUVERNEUR MORRIS—UNIVERSAL SORROW AT HIS DEATH—REMARKS OF BURR ON HAMILTON'S DEATH.

THE instant General Hamilton was struck, he raised himself involuntarily on his toes, turned a little to the left,—at which moment Mr. Pendleton maintained his pistol went off,—and fell heavily on his face. The ball had struck the second or third false rib, and fractured it about the middle. It then passed through the liver and the diaphragm, and as far as was subsequently ascertained, lodged in the first or second lumbar vertebra. The vertebra in which it was lodged, was considerably splintered, so that the *spiculæ* were perceptible to the touch of the finger. The moment Hamilton fell his attendant surgeon, Dr. Hosack, ran to his assistance. He found him supported in the arms of Mr. Pendleton. Perceiving the physician, Hamilton said feebly: “This is a mortal wound, doctor.” He then sank

away and appeared to be lifeless. His pulses were not perceptible; his respiration was entirely suspended; and the motion of his heart had ceased. He was then supposed to be already dead.

As soon as Hamilton was conveyed to the barge, and felt the cool breezes from the river, he began to revive. Some imperfect efforts to breathe were for the first time perceptible. In a few minutes he heaved a labored sigh, and became sensible to the effects of hartshorne. His eyes opened slightly, and wandered to and fro. At length he said: "My vision is indistinct." His pulse then became perceptible, his respiration was more regular, and his sight returned. In a few minutes turning to the case of pistols which was lying in the boat, he said: "Pendleton knows that I did not intend to fire at him." Mr. Pendleton had already informed Dr. Hosack to that effect. By this time his lower extremities had lost all feeling, and Hamilton plainly expressed the opinion that he entertained no hopes that he should long survive. The posture of his limbs was changed, but to no purpose. On approaching the shore he said: "Let Mrs. Hamilton be immediately sent for—let the event be gradually broken to her; but give her hopes." On arriving at the shore a cot was instantly prepared, upon which he was conveyed from the wharf to Mr.

Bayard's residence. Along the route large crowds of weeping and lamenting citizens assembled around the dying statesman; he alone appeared tranquil and composed. Even when he saw the anguish of his family, his equanimity was not disturbed.

Having reached the residence of his friend he became more languid. Mixed wine and water were given him, which restored him somewhat. He then complained of a pain in his back. Large doses of laudanum were subsequently administered; yet the agony which he endured during the whole of that day was most intense. From the first his physicians entertained no hopes of his recovery. The surgeons who were on board the French frigates, then riding in the harbor, were invited to render their assistance. After receiving a full description of the wound, and examining the person of the patient, they decided that the case was hopeless.

During this day, General Hamilton, perceiving that his last hour was approaching, desired to receive the succors of religion. He sent for his friend, the celebrated Dr. John M. Mason, a Presbyterian clergyman, who immediately answered the call and hurried to Hamilton's bedside. As soon as Dr. Mason entered Mr. Hamilton said, that he desired to have the sacrament administered to him.

Dr. Mason replied, that it gave him unutterable pain to receive from him any request with which he could not possibly comply; that the discipline and doctrines of his church forbade him to administer the Lord's Supper privately to any person under any circumstances. But he informed Mr. Hamilton that the sacrament was "an exhibition and pledge of the mercies which the Son of God had purchased; that the absence of the sign does not exclude from the mercies signified, which were accessible to him by faith in their gracious author." Hamilton answered: "I am aware of that; it is only as a sign that I wanted it." Dr. Mason continued that he "had nothing to address to him in his affliction but that same Gospel of the grace of God, which it was his office to preach to the most obscure and illiterate; that in the sight of God all men were on a level, as all have sinned and come short of his glory; and that they must apply to him for pardon and life, as sinners whose only refuge is in his grace, reigning by righteousness through the Lord Jesus Christ." Hamilton replied: "I perceive it to be so; I am a sinner; I look to his mercy." Dr. Mason then adverted to "the infinite merit of the Redeemer as the propitiation for sin, the sole ground of our acceptance with God, the sole channel of his favor to us;" and cited the fol-

lowing passages of Scripture: "There is no other name given under heaven among men, whereby we must be saved but the name of Jesus. He is able to save to the uttermost them who come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them. The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin."

The subject of the duel was then introduced, and Dr. Mason said to him, that it was not necessary that he should be reminded of the moral aspects of that matter; that the blood of Christ was as effectual to wash away the guilt of that transgression as any other; and that there alone he must seek for deliverance from guilt, for peace of conscience, and for hope of future salvation. Mr. Hamilton assented with strong emotion to these statements, and expressed his utter abhorrence of the whole transaction. He said: "It was always against my principles. I used every expedient to avoid the interview; but I have found, for some time past, that my life must be exposed to that man. I went to the field determined not to take *his* life." He expressed the anguish of his mind in recollecting what had passed, and his hope of forgiveness with his God.

Dr. Mason then recurred "to the topic of the divine compassion; the freedom of pardon in Christ



to perishing sinners." Said he: "That grace, my dear General, which brings salvation is rich." Hamilton replied: "It is *rich* grace." "On that grace," continued Dr. Mason, "a sinner has the highest encouragement to repose his confidence, because it is tendered to him upon the surest foundation, the Scripture testifying that we have redemption through the blood of Christ, and the forgiveness of sins according to the richness of his grace." At that expression General Hamilton released the hand of the clergyman which till then he had held, and clasping his own together, looking toward heaven said: "I *have* a tender reliance on the mercy of the Almighty, through the merits of the Lord Jesus Christ." He then closed his eyes, seemingly engaged in prayer. As soon as he opened them again Dr. Mason continued: "The simple truths of the Gospel, which require no abstruse investigation, but faith in the veracity of God who cannot lie, are best suited to your present condition, and they are full of consolation." "I feel them to be so," said he. He then requested Dr. Mason to pray for him; and while the clergyman knelt in prayer the voice of the dying man was distinctly heard accompanying him. When he concluded, Hamilton said: "Amen, God grant it!"

As Dr. Mason was taking his leave he remarked

to Mr. Hamilton that there was one request which he had to make of him, and being asked what it was, replied that whatever might be the issue of his affliction, he would give his testimony against the practice of duelling. Said he in reply: "I will; I have done it. If that be the issue," (meaning his death) "you will find it in writing. If it please God that I recover, I shall do it in a manner which will effectually put me out of its reach in future." When Dr. Mason recurred to the importance of renouncing every other trust for the eternal world, except the mercy of God in Christ, with a particular reference to the duel, Mr. Hamilton was much affected, and said: "Let us not pursue that subject any further; it agitates me." The clergyman then took his leave; and as he left the apartment he heard the dying statesman exclaim: "God be merciful to me a sinner!" Dr. Mason called again the next morning, but Mr. Hamilton was then beyond the power of conversation. He was surrounded by his weeping family and friends. He still retained the same composure and serenity; and his great intellect was unclouded to the last.

It was still however the wish of Mr. Hamilton, dictated by his own religious convictions, to receive the communion of the Lord's Supper. Accordingly after the departure of Dr. Mason, he sent for

Bishop Moore, of the Episcopal church, accompanied with the request that he would perform that office. On the first interview the mind of the bishop was not clear upon the propriety of doing so to one who had been a party to a duel, and who was not a communicant of the church. Upon further deliberation, however, he returned to the chamber of Mr. Hamilton to converse with him in reference to his religious views. When he entered, Mr. Hamilton said: "My dear sir, you perceive my unfortunate situation, and no doubt have been made acquainted with the circumstances which led to it. It is my desire to receive the Communion at your hands. I hope you will not conceive that there is any impropriety in my request. It has been for some time past the wish of my heart, and it was my intention to take an early opportunity of uniting myself to the church by the reception of that holy ordinance." Bishop Moore replied that Mr. Hamilton must be sensible of the delicate situation in which he was placed; that however desirous he might be to afford consolation to a fellow mortal in distress, it was his duty as a minister of the Gospel to hold up the law of God as paramount to all other law; and that therefore under the influence of such sentiments he must unequivocally condemn the practice which had brought him to

his present unhappy condition. Mr. Hamilton acknowledged the propriety of these sentiments, and declared that he regarded his interview with Mr. Burr with sorrow and contrition. Bishop Moore then asked him: "Should it please God to restore you to health, will you never be again engaged in a similar transaction? And will you employ all your influence in society to discountenance this barbarous custom?" His answer was: "That, sir, is my deliberate intention."

The conversation then turned upon the subject of the Communion. The bishop dwelt upon the requisite qualifications of those who wished to become partakers of that holy ordinance. He propounded the following questions to Mr. Hamilton: "Do you sincerely repent of your past sins? Have you a lively faith in God's mercy through Christ, with a thankful remembrance of the death of Christ? And are you disposed to live in love and charity with all men?" Mr. Hamilton lifted up his hands and said: "With the utmost sincerity of heart I can answer those questions in the affirmative. I have no ill-will against Colonel Burr. I met him with a fixed resolution to do him no harm. I forgive all that happened." The bishop then continued that the terrors of the law were intended only for those who were obdurate and impenitent;

that the blessings of the Gospel were promised to the contrite and penitent; and that as he professed himself to be of the latter class, the Communion would be administered to him. Mr. Hamilton received this sacrament with the utmost devoutness and solemnity, and expressed "the strongest confidence in the mercy of God, through the intercession of the Redeemer." After this duty had been performed one only yet remained; but it was the most painful of all. No incident in the wide and diversified range of human suffering and misfortune exceeds in intensity of sadness and wo, the scene which occurred in the chamber of that dying and murdered statesman, when he bade his last farewell to his afflicted family. At the sight of his children as they surrounded his bed, seven in number, his utterance forsook him. He opened his eyes, gave them all one long last look of affection, and then closed them again until they were removed. The grief of Mrs. Hamilton at this crisis became frantic. It was apprehended that her reason would sink under its weight. Mr. Hamilton alone could calm her spirit. He addressed her frequently in a firm yet affectionate and impressive manner, with these remarkable words: "Remember, my Eliza, you are a Christian."

Having embraced his wife for the last time, he

calmly composed himself to die; and he expired the day after the fatal meeting, at two o'clock in the afternoon. Thus passed away from the earth one of the most gifted, powerful, and illustrious spirits which has ever figured upon the great and wondrous stage of human affairs.\* The grief which pervaded the whole nation at this lamentable event was profound and universal. It exceeded even that which ensued upon the death of Washington; because the departure from life of that great patriot was neither violent nor premature. He had completed his glorious career; and expired when full of years and honors. The death of Hamilton, however, was regarded universally as a murder, and as a sacrifice made to the implacable hate of his antagonist, who had clearly evinced a determination to accept of no explanation or apology, except such as would have degraded and injured his victim in the eyes of the world.†

\* See *New York Evening Post*, July 14, 1804.

† The very day after Hamilton's death, his assassin very coolly wrote the following letter to his son-in-law, Joseph Alston, while he was surrounded by a whole community convulsed with paroxysms of grief:

NEW YORK, July 13, 1804.

“General Hamilton died yesterday. The malignant federalists or tories, and the embittered Clintonians, unite in endeavoring to excite public sympathy in his favor and indignation against his antagonist. Thousands of absurd falsehoods are circulated with industry. The



Mr. Hamilton expired on Thursday, and his funeral took place on the succeeding Saturday. The scene was one of the utmost solemnity and impressiveness. By common consent all business was suspended. Sorrow seemed to be stamped on every countenance; and all the inhabitants of the city crowded to pay the last testimonial of respect and affection to the illustrious dead. During the interval between his death and funeral, many societies and corporations in New York held meetings and passed resolutions of condolence. The chief merchants met at the Tontine Coffee House. The flags of all the shipping were hoisted at half-mast. The Common Council assembled, passed resolutions of regret, and ordered that all the bells of the corporation and of the churches in the city should be muffled and tolled at intervals during the entire day of the burial. The members of the Bar met, and passed resolves such as are rarely equaled in depth of sincerity and profound respect, by those which are usually elicited from the members of that body, even on the decease of their most illustrious breth-

most illiberal means are practiced in order to produce excitement, and for the moment with effect.

“I propose leaving town for a few days, and meditate also a journey for some weeks, but whither is not resolved. Perhaps to Statesburgh. You will hear from me again in about eight days.

A. BURR.”

ren. The military forces of the city were ordered to parade on the occasion of the funeral, and be prepared to confer the highest military honors over the grave. The students of law, the students of Columbia College, the members of the General Society of Mechanics and Traders of New York, the members of the St. Andrew's Society, all assembled, recorded their grief, and determined to attend the funeral. The Brothers of the Ancient Society of Tammany resolved to meet by tribes in the Great Wigwam, and follow under the orders of their Grand Sachem, the funeral cortège of their fallen hero to the tomb.

When the hour appointed for the funeral arrived, a more imposing scene had never been witnessed on this continent, than that which was then presented. The Society of the Cincinnati very properly took charge of the last obsequies of their departed brother. Twenty-three different orders, societies, and corporations joined the funeral procession, besides the military array, composed of both infantry and artillery. The great standard of the order of the Cincinnati, which Washington himself had consecrated, shrouded in crape, was carried in the procession in the rear of the corpse. Solemn martial music, hallowed in the memories of not a few then present by many revolutionary scenes, reverberated

through the silent air, and drew tears from myriads of eyes. At twelve o'clock the procession moved. The pall was supported by eight of the most distinguished citizens of the State of New York, the personal friends of the deceased. On the top of the coffin were placed the general's hat and sword. His old charger, which had carried him over more than one field of blood, was dressed in mourning and led behind the bier. When the immense procession arrived at Trinity Church on Broadway, Gouverneur Morris, surrounded by the four sons of General Hamilton, delivered an oration characterized by solemn and appropriate eloquence, from a stage erected in front of the church. The multitude were bathed in tears, while the impressive voice of the orator gave utterance to thoughts which found a ready echo in every heart. Speaking of the illustrious dead, he said: "You have long witnessed his professional conduct and felt his unrivaled eloquence. You know how well he performed the duties of a citizen. You know that he never courted your favors by adulation or the sacrifice of his own judgment. You have seen him contending against you, saving your dearest interests as it were in spite of yourselves. And now you feel and enjoy the benefits resulting from the firm energy of his conduct. Bear this testimony to the memory of

my departed friend. *I charge you to protect his fame.* It is all he has left—all that these poor orphan children will inherit from their father. But, my countrymen, that fame may be a rich treasure to you also. Let it be the test by which to examine those who solicit your favor. Disregarding professions view their conduct, and on a doubtful occasion ask, *Would Hamilton have done this thing?*

“You all know how he perished. On this last scene I cannot, I must not dwell. I might excite emotions too strong for your better judgment. Suffer not your indignation to lead to any act which might again offend the insulted majesty of the law. On his part, as from his lips, though with my voice,—for *his* voice you will hear no more,—let me entreat you to respect yourselves.”

After the conclusion of the address of Mr. Morris, the corpse was committed to its last resting place, and the impressive service of the Episcopal Church was read by Bishop Moore. The solemnities were then terminated by the discharge of three volleys of musketry over the grave.

Throughout the whole nation meetings were held, and resolutions of condolence and sympathy at the national loss were passed. Orations were delivered in which, for once, the loftiest eloquence found a fitting theme for its sublimest flights. At

Boston and Philadelphia the demonstrations of regret were universal and impressive. In the former city, Harrison G. Otis was selected to give form and utterance to the universal sorrow. Said he eloquently: "Must we realize that Hamilton is no more! Must the sod not yet cemented on the tomb of Washington, and still moist with our tears, be so soon disturbed to admit the beloved companion of Washington, the partner of his dangers, the object of his confidence, the disciple who leaned upon his bosom! Insatiable Death! Will not the heroes and statesmen whom mad ambition has sent from the crimsoned fields of Europe, suffice to people thy dreary dominions! Thy dismal avenues have been thronged with princely martyrs and illustrious victims. Crowns and sceptres, the spoils of royalty, are among thy recent trophies, and the blood of innocence and valor has flowed in torrents at thy inexorable command. Such have been thy ravages in the old world. And in our infant country, how small was the remnant of our revolutionary heroes! Could not our Warren, our Montgomery, our Mercer, our Greene, and our Washington appease thy vengeance!" And with appropriate and truthful words the orator concludes:—

"The universal sorrow manifested in every part of the Union, upon the melancholy exit of this

great man, is an unequivocal testimonial of the public opinion of his worth. The place of his residence is overspread with a gloom which bespeaks the presence of a public calamity; and the prejudices of party are absorbed in the overflowing tide of national grief.”\*

“So stream the sorrows that embalm the brave;  
The tears which virtue sheds on glory’s grave.”

\* See “Eulogy on General Alexander Hamilton, pronounced at the request of the citizens of Boston, July 26th, 1804, by the Hon. Harrison G. Otis. New York, 1804.”



## CHAPTER XIX.

THE EFFECTS OF HAMILTON'S DEATH—HIS PECULIAR INTELLECTUAL QUALITIES—HIS LOGICAL POWERS—HIS FERTILE IMAGINATION—HIS PROFOUND LEARNING—HIS UNTIRING INDUSTRY—HIS ABILITIES AS A WRITER—HIS ELOQUENCE AS A SPEAKER—HIS MORAL QUALITIES—HIS INTEGRITY—HIS SINCERITY—HIS FORTITUDE AS A SOLDIER—HIS UNEQUALED ABILITIES AS A STATESMAN AND PATRIOT—HIS FAILINGS—HIS DUEL WITH BURR—HIS PERSONAL APPEARANCE—SUBSEQUENT HISTORY OF MRS. HAMILTON—HER INTERVIEW WITH AARON BURR—HER DEATH—FATE OF BURR.

THE premature death of Hamilton was a national calamity. It is not difficult to predict to what exalted posts of honor he would have been promoted, had he lived. Possessing, as he did, the full confidence of the nation, having filled important offices of trust with the purest integrity and the highest praise; being devoted to the interests of his country; his faculties being matured by experience, and his knowledge of the wants of the nation enlarged by study and observation; it is not improbable that a very few years would have seen him occupying the presidential chair. And if, as was probable, that event occurred during the existence of the war of 1812, Mr. Hamilton would, by virtue of his office, have been commander-in-chief of the American armies; and it is but a reasonable

inference to suppose that his military genius would have shone forth in that great crisis more resplendent than ever. In a word, the completed and fully consummated career of Alexander Hamilton would without much doubt have been the brightest, loftiest, and noblest presented in the whole range of American history.

All this fair picture was spoiled by the malignity of his bitterest foe, Aaron Burr. A nation's tears were shed over the grave of his illustrious victim, and the undying curses of all virtuous men, in all coming time, were secured to the perpetrator of his murder. Before concluding this volume we will make a few observations upon the history, character, genius, and fame of Hamilton, such as will enable us better to estimate the position which he deserves to hold on the page of American history.

The chief qualities of the mind of Alexander Hamilton were a clear and vigorous reasoning faculty, and a chaste and prolific imagination. He possessed a rare and beautiful proportion of these cardinal mental qualities. In the discussion of any subject he seized hold of the main points with the vigor of an intellectual giant, and handled them skillfully, gracefully, and with ease. No matter how abstruse the details of a discussion or an inquiry might be to other men, his well-trained and

powerful intellect followed out and unraveled all its intricacies, and showed them up clearly to view. No matter how profound and deep a theme might be, Hamilton easily and perseveringly sounded its lowest and obscurest depths, and revealed them plainly to the observation of men. He was always thorough and exhaustive in his researches, as his reports as Secretary of the Treasury will clearly evince. He dived to the bottom of every subject. Having laid down his premises plainly and fairly, he argues from those premises with the most logical clearness, accuracy, and force. His reasoning forms a chain of iron which a giant cannot break. But that iron chain, though ponderous and powerful, was a *gilded* one. It was burnished with all the beauty and polish of a rich imagination. Few writers in our language, not even those who have cultivated elegance and euphony of style as their sole accomplishment, and whose entire attention has been devoted to the *labor limae*, excelled him in this particular. His essays, pamphlets, and reports are masterpieces; each perfect, symmetrical and finished in itself.

This merit becomes the more extraordinary when we remember the vast quantity of his writings. He did not confine his powers to the elaboration of a few great productions, and exhaust upon them all

his mental resources. His intellect was too prolific and too rich for any such aim. The number and amount of Hamilton's writings are prodigious. They occupy seven large octavo volumes, exclusive of the *Federalist*. They are more numerous than the productions of Burke, Bolingbroke, Brougham, Webster, or Quincy Adams; nor are the writings of any modern or ancient statesman, except perhaps Cicero alone, equal in amount to those of Hamilton. Nor should it be forgotten, in our estimation of his intellectual resources, that he was not a recluse whose life was passed in the quietude and retirement of his study. The largest portion of his time was spent in the hurry and bustle of public business, in the official bureau, in the courts of justice, in giving professional counsel, in the popular and deliberative assembly.

In this last sphere of intellectual activity Hamilton shone with unsurpassed brilliancy; for as an orator he had no superior. His manner of delivery was easy, graceful, and impressive. His utterance was fluent, unembarrassed, and self-possessed. His eloquence was Ciceronian rather than Demosthenian; and while, when occasion served, he could thunder with a power and effectiveness not unworthy of the ancient and implacable foe of Philip of Macedon, his more prevalent style was that of

suavity, melody, and grace. He spoke as if the Attic Bee dwelt forever on his lips. In a deliberative assembly, in the courts of justice, or in the halls of the academy, the eloquence of Hamilton was a model of perfection. He was the pride and delight of all who could appreciate the beauties of a polished, consummate, and masterly eloquence. Even his great rival and enemy, Aaron Burr, was compelled to concede Hamilton's supremacy in this respect.

His literary and scientific attainments were by no means limited. His knowledge was extensive and accurate. Possessing a retentive memory, clear discrimination, and indomitable industry, he soon mastered the details of every branch of learning to which his attention was directed, and made them his own. In his youth he spent only three years in Columbia College; yet during that period he rendered himself familiar with classical languages and learning, with general history, with the mathematics and exact sciences. We have already seen how, in four short months, he acquired a competent knowledge of the dry and abstruse learning, both of the common and the statute law, and prepared himself for admission to the bar. His subsequent and rapid rise to the first eminence in that profession among rivals and associates of the highest abilities,

as soon as he devoted himself actively to his professional career, clearly evince how superior his legal gifts and attainments were. Had he lived, it is not improbable that he would have become one of the most celebrated and profound jurists of the land. His associates at the bar, usually so jealous of superior genius and of unusual success, regarded him with pride, and rarely with envy. He possessed the fullest confidence of the courts. In the trial of causes, and in the discussion of legal principles, it was truly said of him, by one eminently competent to judge, that "without ever stopping or even hesitating, by a rapid and manly march he led the listening judge and the fascinated juror, step by step, through a delightful region, brightening as he advanced, till his argument rose to demonstration, and eloquence was rendered useless by conviction."\*

The moral qualities of Hamilton were such as every wise and good man must esteem. His integrity and honesty were unimpeachable. This trait in his character first won him the confidence of Washington, and rendered him his bosom friend

\* See "Discourse delivered in the North Dutch Church, in the city of Albany, occasioned by the ever to be lamented death of General Alexander Hamilton, on 29th July, 1804, by Eliphalet Nott, A. M., Pastor of the Presbyterian Church in said city. New York, 1804."



while yet almost a youth. During the progress of the revolutionary war, he intrusted Hamilton with the most important secret missions, in preference to all his other officers and subordinates. After the elevation of Washington to the presidency, he conferred on Hamilton the most important and responsible post in his Cabinet; for at that critical period the finances of the country were the most difficult matter of adjustment which demanded the attention of government. Hamilton was appointed Secretary of the Treasury with the approval of the greatest financier who has ever adorned American history.\* The manner in which he performed his difficult duties has ever been the subject of universal praise. Twice in the House of Representatives did his personal and political opponent, Mr. Giles, move an inquiry into the details of his official acts. Twice was the most searching and malignant investigation entered into in reference to the Treasury department. And twice were the committees, with Giles himself at their head, compelled to report that, after the most thorough examination, not the smallest inaccuracy, not the slightest negligence, not the least dishonesty, could be detected in the

\* Washington, in the first instance, selected Robert Morris as Secretary of the Treasury. That gentleman declined, and recommended Mr. Hamilton, knowing that he would be acceptable to the President.—See “Sullivan’s Familiar Letters,” Boston, 1834, p. 40.

administration of the Treasury office under Mr. Hamilton.

In truth, his abilities in this department saved this country from ruin. Exhausted by the revolutionary struggle, it had become a financial desert. The barren rock of the national finances towered in loneliness and desolation over the waste. Hamilton, like Moses of old, smote that rock with the potent rod of a magician, and instantly golden streams issued forth to fertilize, adorn, and enrich the desert. The public credit of the nation had long been sick. At length it had yielded to the power of a fatal disease and expired. It became a lifeless corpse, and was rapidly becoming putrid and offensive. Hamilton touched that corpse with the skill and power of a worker of miracles, and instantly it sprang into life again. Nor was it a feeble and languishing life, but the life of a vigorous, graceful, and resistless giant, whose powers filled the world with respect and admiration.

As a soldier Hamilton was eminently brave, chivalrous, and prudent. No charge of cowardice or pusillanimity was ever made against him. His whole conduct during the war, his heroism at Yorktown, where he triumphantly led the forlorn hope; and his unnecessary meeting of Burr on "the field of honor," all evince that he was brave even to a

fault. And yet, as a conqueror, he was humane and benevolent. He spared the effusion of human blood in every instance in which it was possible. When victory favored his arms, he did not sully his glory by cruelty or malice, or wantonly riot in human suffering. In his social and domestic qualities Hamilton was kindly, generous, and affectionate. In him the friendless found a friend, the fatherless a father, and the poor a benefactor, a protector, and an advocate. When the rich oppressed the indigent, when the powerful threatened the defenseless, when those in high places ventured to outrage justice, then it was that Hamilton displayed the true grandeur and dignity of his nature, in defending the innocent, the defenseless, and the injured, with a scathing power of eloquence which filled the observer with mingled terror and admiration. When he perished, among the myriads of eyes which wept, there were not a few of the widows and orphans of the land who blessed his memory, and shed bitter tears over his untimely fate. In his domestic circle, he was ever most tenderly beloved, and he was eminently happy in that circle.

But the chief glory of Hamilton was his celebrity as a statesman. He appeared upon the troubled ocean of the revolutionary era; he rose at once to a lofty eminence; and there he stood amid the furi-

ously tossing and heaving floods, firm as a rock, towering in lonely majesty, with Washington only at his side; and visible from afar as a noble monument of greatness, unshaken by the raging storms above him or by the rolling waters beneath him. The part which Hamilton played in the organization and establishment of the federal government of this glorious republic, and his subsequent administration of its difficult and involved financial affairs, will remain until the latest period of recorded time, as one of the most honorable memorials in the history of statesmen. His task, which he so successfully accomplished, was more difficult than most men, at this late day, would readily imagine. We now behold the fair and perfect proportions of the edifice which he erected; but we do not see the horrid and repulsive *chaos* out of which he evoked so much order, beauty, and symmetry. That chaos seemed to most men, as it lay spread out in hideous and involved masses over the whole continent, immediately after the conclusion of the revolutionary war, utterly beyond the possibility of adjustment and arrangement. Thirteen conflicting and rival States, each with her own interests, passions, and jealousies to satisfy and to harmonize, formed the incongruous and heterogeneous bulk out of which the American confederacy was to be constructed.

It seemed a task which no human skill could achieve. Yet it was not too difficult or too elaborate for the genius and the skill of Hamilton. Out of all this boundless chaos, out of this immense mass of conflicting elements, the fair and majestic form of the American Federal Constitution gradually arose, created by the masterly touch of his hand, and eventually overshadowed the whole continent with its glory and benignant operation. As long as this confederacy shall survive the storms of time; as long as the land of Washington shall remain the home of freemen and the asylum of the oppressed; as long as the pen of history shall record how powerful, happy, and glorious Americans have been under the influence and protection of this government and this Constitution, so long will the fame of Hamilton survive, fresh and fadeless, as the first of American statesmen, and as the second of her patriots and her heroes. The name and fame of Hamilton will not die, until that dark day shall come when the name and fame of Washington will also be remembered no more.\*

And yet Hamilton had his failings. We do

\* The permanent reduction of the national debt of the United States was due to the operation of the last report made by Mr. Hamilton, previous to his retirement from the Treasury, on the public credit.—See “Sullivan’s Familiar Letters,” p. 62.



not attempt to disguise them. He was a man of strong natural passions; nor were those passions always kept under the control of that severer virtue which religion requires. Had not this one blemish existed in his character, the old adage, *Humanum est errare*, would for once have lost its universal applicability and its oracular truth. Yet none are perfect; and had Hamilton been absolutely free from fault, he had not been human. But the errors which he actually committed were as trifles when compared with the errors, of a similar description, which have been habitually perpetrated by many men who aspire to no humble place in the pantheon of human fame and virtue.

The chief error of Hamilton's life was his duel with Aaron Burr. It has been said of him that he should have had moral courage enough to decline the challenge; and that he should have known, that his honorable career as a soldier and officer during the Revolution had sufficiently established his reputation for bravery to have defied the charge of cowardice under any circumstances. But it should be remembered also that public opinion at that period, was not as hostile to the practice of dueling as it is at present. And especially should it be borne in mind that Hamilton was a military man; that his antagonist was a military man; and that



the prejudices of military men on this subject are stronger, in the very nature of things, than those of other persons. Yet even these prejudices Hamilton had in a great measure overcome; and he had determined, in case he survived his interview with Burr, to have made a public protestation against the usage of dueling, and thrown all the weight of his influence against it.

The comparative innocence of Hamilton, even in that meeting, was more clearly evinced by the fact that it was his expressed determination not to fire at his opponent. This intention he declared both to his second Mr. Pendleton, and in writing previous to the interview. His only fault was his rash exposure of his own life to the malignant vengeance of his enemy. For this crime we may hope he has amply atoned by his death, and by the many matchless virtues which adorned his life. He himself assigned a reason of no trifling moment for his intention to meet Col. Burr, which is in itself highly honorable to him. He asserted that he believed that if he declined the conflict, it would injure his future usefulness to his country, in the prosecution of those great measures which he yet contemplated, in consequence of the prevalent prejudices which then existed in the community in favor of duelling. Patriotic motives, therefore, lay

at the bottom even of the greatest and most fatal error of his life.

The personal appearance of Mr. Hamilton was pleasing and attractive. When at the age of thirty-eight, he resumed the practice of the law in New York, in 1795, he was thus described: He was under the middle size, thin in person, and very erect, courtly and dignified in his bearing. His hair was combed back from his forehead, powdered, and collected in a cue behind. His complexion was very delicate and fair, his cheeks rosy, and the whole expression pleasing and cheerful. His forehead was lofty, capacious and prominent. His appearance accorded well with the expectations which his prodigious fame excited. His voice was musical, his manner frank and impulsive. His ordinary dress was a blue coat with gilt buttons, a white silk waistcoat, black silk small-clothes, and white silk stockings. His figure, though slight, was well proportioned and graceful. His appearance and carriage betokened the possessor of a masterly intellect, and one fully conscious of his powers.

It was the singular fate of the wife of Alexander Hamilton to survive him more than fifty years. During that long interval of widowhood, she received the boundless respect and sympathy of a grateful nation. Immediately after her husband's

death, she wrote the following appropriate letter in reply to a communication of condolence sent her by the Order of the Cincinnati, to which her husband had belonged, and of which he had been President-General.

“ALBANY, August 11th, 1804.

“SIR: To the distress of a heart so deeply afflicted as mine, from the irreparable loss of a most amiable and affectionate husband, I trust the respectable society in which you preside will impute the delay of an acknowledgment for their consolatory letter, couched in terms that evince their sympathy emanates from the heart.

“Although great mitigation of that affliction, with which I am so severely depressed, can only be hoped from the mercies of the Divine Being, in whose dispensations it is the duty of his creatures humbly and devoutly to acquiesce; yet the wounded heart derives a degree of consolation from the tenderness with which its lot is bewailed by the virtuous, the wise, and humane—and also from that high honor and respect with which the memory of the dear deceased has been commemorated by them, and those contemplated in the resolutions of the Society of the Cincinnati, transmitted by you, and for which you, sir, will be pleased to convey my warmest thanks to that respectable body.

“I reciprocate with sensibility your and their commendation of me to the Divine care and protection. May they ever enjoy it, and without alloy. I am, sir, with great respect, your obedient servant, &c.”

Once only during the progress of her life was she afflicted with the sight of her husband's murderer. In the year 1822 she was traveling from New York to Albany on one of the boats on the Hudson river. The company had been summoned to dinner. When Mrs. Hamilton had almost reached her seat in the dining saloon, on raising her eyes she perceived Aaron Burr standing directly opposite to her, with the narrow width of the table alone between them. The shock was too much for her system, she uttered a loud scream, fell, and was carried in a fainting state from the apartment. As soon as she recovered she insisted on being set on shore at the first landing-place. She refused to journey farther on a vessel which contained the detested form of Aaron Burr. It is said that, after the removal of Mrs. Hamilton from the dining saloon, Burr deliberately sat down and ate a hearty dinner with the utmost composure. The latter years of this excellent woman were spent in acts of charity and benevolence, in a public institution in the vicinity of New York. She died at length in

1854, at the age of ninety-seven years and three months. Her husband was not unavenged. Besides the mighty load of universal obloquy and hate which overwhelmed Burr as the murderer of an innocent and illustrious victim, poverty and suffering attended him during his remaining years. Thus when wandering in France, an exile and an outcast, suspected and frowned on by Napoleon, he records as follows in his diary of November 23, 1810: "Nothing from America, and really I shall starve. Borrowed three francs to-day. Four or five little debts keep me in constant alarm; all together, about two Louis.

"December 1, 1810. — came in upon me this morning, just as I was out of bed, for twenty-seven livres. Paid him, which took literally my last sous. When at Denon's, thought I might as well go to St. Pelasgie; set off, but recollected I owed the woman who sits in the passage two sous for a cigar, so turned about to pursue my way by the Pont des Arts, which was within fifty paces; remembered I had not wherewith to pay the toll, being one sous; had to go all the way round by the Pont Royal, more than half a mile."

Burr was subsequently afflicted with the mysterious and premature death of his daughter, Theodosia Alston, one of the most beautiful and accomplished

women of her time. She and her son were supposed to have been lost at sea. At length this aged curse of his country and disgrace of his race died at New York, on the 14th of September, 1836, in the eighty-first year of his age. He survived his duel with General Hamilton more than thirty years; and during that long and cheerless interval he passed through scenes of trial, anxiety, and suffering which would have completely crushed any intellect not as powerful, and any heart not as adamantine, as his own.



# APPENDIX.

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## No. I.

### FUNERAL PROCESSION OF HAMILTON.

THE Society of the Cincinnati being charged with the direction of the funeral ceremonies of its President-General, the following is the order of procession which will take place to-morrow at ten o'clock, as commemorative of an event of the deepest national regret.

#### ORDER OF PROCESSION.

1. The Military Corps, commanded by Col. Morton.
2. The Society of the Cincinnati.
3. Clergy of all denominations.
4. The Corpse.
5. The General's Horse.
6. Relations of the deceased.
7. Physicians.
8. The Judges of the Supreme Court.
9. Mr. Gouverneur Morris in his carriage.
10. Gentlemen of the Bar and Students at Law.
11. The Governor and Lieutenant-Governor of the State.
12. The Mayor and Corporation of the City.
13. Members of Congress and Civil Officers of the United States.
14. The Ministers, Consuls, and Residents of Foreign Powers.
15. The Officers of the Army and Navy of the United States.

16. Military and Naval Officers of Foreign Powers.
17. Militia Officers of the State.
18. President, Directors, and Officers of the respective Banks.
19. Chamber of Commerce and Merchants.
20. Marine Society, Wardens of the Port, and Masters and Officers of all vessels in the Harbor.
21. The President, Professors, and Students of Columbia College.
22. The different Societies in such order as their respective Presidents may arrange.
23. The Citizens in general.

The Military Corps commanded by Col. Morton being ordered to parade in the Park at 10 o'clock, accompanied with six pieces of Artillery, two of the pieces will remain on the ground under the command of Capt. Maclean, and will fire minute guns from the movement of the Corpse until it arrives at Trinity Church.

#### FUNERAL OBSEQUIES.

On Saturday, the next day, the remains of ALEXANDER HAMILTON were committed to the grave, with every possible testimony of respect and sorrow. The following will present the reader with a correct account of the manner in which the sad solemnities were conducted.

The Military, under the command of Lieutenant-Col. Morton, were drawn up in front of Mr. Church's house, in Robinson-street, where the body had been deposited. On the appearance of the Corpse it was received by the whole line with presented arms, and saluted by the officers;—melancholy Music by a large and elegant Band.

The Military then preceded the bier, in open column and inverted order, the left in front, with arms reversed, the Band playing a Dead March. At 12 o'clock the pro-

cession moved in the following order, through Beekman, Pearl, and Whitehall-streets, and up Broadway to the Church:

The Artillery.

The 6th Regiment of Militia.

Flank Companies.

Cincinnati Society.

A numerous train of Clergy of all denominations.

THE CORPSE WITH PALL BEARERS.

The General's horse appropriately dressed.

His Children and Relatives.

Physicians.

Gouverneur Morris, the funeral orator, in his carriage.

The Gentlemen of the Bar, all in deep mourning.

The Lieutenant-Governor of the State, in his carriage.

Corporation of the city of New York.

Resident Agents of Foreign Powers.

Officers of our Army and Navy.

Military and Naval Officers of Foreign Powers.

Militia Officers of the State.

The various Officers of the respective Banks.

Chamber of Commerce and Merchants.

Wardens of the Port, and Masters of vessels in the Harbor.

The President, Professors, and Students of Columbia Col-

lege, in mourning gowns.

St. Andrew's Society, mostly in mourning.

Tammany Society.

Mechanic Society.

Marine Society.

Citizens in general.

*The Pall was supported by*

General Matthew Clarkson,

Oliver Wolcott, Esquire,

Richard Harison, Esquire,

Abijah Hammond, Esquire,  
Josiah Ogden Hoffman, Esquire,  
Richard Varick, Esquire,  
William Bayard, Esquire, and  
His Honor Judge Lawrence.

On the top of the coffin was the General's hat and sword; his boots and spurs reversed across the horse. His gray horse, dressed in mourning, was led by two black servants dressed in white, and white turbans trimmed with black.

The streets were lined with people; doors and windows were filled principally with weeping females; and even the house tops were covered with spectators, who came from all parts to behold the melancholy procession.

When the advance platoon of the Military reached the Church, the whole column wheeled backward by sections from the flanks of platoons, forming a lane, bringing their muskets to a reversed order, and resting the cheek on the butt of the piece in the customary attitude of grief. Through the avenue thus formed, the Corpse, preceded by the clergy of different denominations and Society of Cincinnati, and followed by the relations of the deceased, and different public bodies, advanced to the Church, the Bands, with drums muffled, playing all the time a pensive, solemn air.

## No. II.

## DEATH-BED SCENE OF AARON BURR.

It has generally been believed that Burr died an unbeliever, refusing religious consolation. A distinguished Episcopal minister, in preaching a sermon to the young men of Washington city, alluded to Col. Burr's supposed religious infidelity, which led to the following highly interesting letter of the venerable Rev. Dr. Vanpelt:

“THURSDAY, HAMMOND-ST., N. Y., Dec. 13, 1855.

“Mr. Sam. C. Reid, Jr.—My dear Sir: I received yours of Monday, 10th inst., last evening, in which you ‘desire me to give you a full statement of all the facts concerning the last moments of Colonel Aaron Burr,’ &c. In compliance with your desire, I state—that in the summer, about the 20th June, 1836, Colonel A. Burr came to Port Richmond Hotel, Staten Island, where he took board, near which I then resided, as also did the relative and friend of Colonel Burr, Judge Ogden Edwards. The Colonel (Burr) being a valetudinarian, in feeble health, Judge Edwards solicited me, as often as I conveniently could, to visit him, and administer the consolation of religion to him, which, he said, was desired by Col. Burr, and would be agreeable to him.

Accordingly, from that time till the 13th of September, 1836, the day on which he died at the said Port Richmond House, I visited him as a minister of the Gospel, once or twice a week. At these consecutive interviews I was uniformly received by him with his accustomed politeness and urbanity of manner. The time spent with him at each interview—which was an hour, more or less—was chiefly employed

in religious conversations, adapting to his declining health, his feeble state of body, and his advanced age, concluding by prayer to Almighty God for the exercise of his great mercy, the influence of his Holy Spirit and divine blessing. In all which he appeared to take an interest and be pleased, and particularly would thank me for the prayers I offered up in his behalf, for my kind offices, and the interest I took in his spiritual welfare, saying it gave him pleasure to see me and hear my voice. And when I reminded him of the advantages he had enjoyed, of his honored and pious ancestry, viz. : his father a minister of the Gospel, and President of the College at Princeton, New Jersey, and his mother a descendant of the learned and celebrated divine Jonathan Edwards ; and that doubtless many prayers had gone up to Heaven from the hearts of his parents for his well-being and happiness, it seemed to affect him. And when I asked him as to his views of the Holy Scriptures, he responded—‘They are the most perfect system of truth the world has ever seen.’ So that judging from his own declaration and behavior to me, as his spiritual adviser, he was not an atheist nor a deist.

“I did not administer the holy sacrament to him, nor did he suggest and request me to do it.

“In regard to other topics, in the course of repeated conversations, he remarked he was near General Montgomery when he fell at Quebec ; and that notwithstanding that disaster, if the army had pushed on, they would have succeeded. In reference to the affair and death of General Hamilton but little was said. He intimated, however, that he was provoked to that encounter.

“At my last interview with him, about 12 o’clock at noon, the day he departed this life, about 2 o’clock, P. M., as aforesaid, September 13, 1836, I found him as usual,



pleased to see me, tranquil in mind, and not disturbed by bodily pain.

“Observing a paleness and change in his countenance, and his pulse tremulous, fluttering and erratic, I asked him how he felt. He replied, not so well as when I saw him last. I then said, ‘Colonel, I do not wish to alarm you, but judging from the state of your pulse, your time with us is short.’ He replied, ‘I am aware of it.’ It was then near 1 o’clock, P. M., and his mind and memory seemed perfect. I said to him, ‘In this solemn hour of your apparent dissolution, believing, as you do, in the sacred Scriptures, your accountability to God, let me ask you how you feel in view of approaching eternity; whether you have good hope, through grace, that all your sins will be pardoned, and God will, in mercy, pardon you, for the sake of the merits and righteousness of his beloved son, our Lord Jesus Christ, who in love suffered and died for us the agonizing, bitter death of the cross, by whom alone we can have the only sure hope of salvation?’ To which he said, with deep and evident emotion, ‘On that subject I am coy;’ by which I understood him to mean, that on a subject of such magnitude and momentous interest, touching the assurance of his salvation, he felt coy, cautious (as the word denotes) to express himself in full confidence.

“With his usual cordial concurrence and manifest desire we knelt in prayer before the throne of heavenly grace—imploping God’s mercy and blessing. He turned in his bed, and put himself in an humble devotional posture, and seemed deeply engaged in the religious service, thanking me, as usual, for the prayer made for him.

“Calm and composed, I recommended him to the mercy of God and to the word of his grace, with a last farewell. At about 2 o’clock, P. M., without a groan or a struggle, he breathed his last. His death was easy and gentle as a

taper in the socket, and as the summer's wave that dies upon the shore. Thus died Col. Aaron Burr.

“His first funeral service was performed by me in the Port Richmond House, where he died. Thence we took his remains to the chapel of Princeton College, N. J., where Dr. Carnahan, the President, and myself, performed his last funeral service before the students, the faculty, the military, and a numerous assemblage, and he was buried, as he requested, in the sepulchre of his ancestors.

“With respects,

P. J. VANPELT.”

THE END.

203







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